Vietnam Generation

Volume 7
Number 1 *Viet Nam Generation, Volume 7, Number 1-2*
Article 1

1-1995

Viet Nam Generation, Volume 7, Number 1-2

Viet Nam Generation

A Journal of Recent History and Contemporary Culture

Volume 7, Numbers 1-2

Contents

Viet Nam Generation **Volume 7, Numbers 1-2**

In this issue

On the Cover

This issue's cover image is a photograph which belongs to *VG* Managing Editor and book designer Steve Gomes: He writes:

That handsome devil on the cover is my dad, William Gomes. He tells me that this picture was taken in November '65, near the airstrip at Lai Khe—back when he was with the 2/28th, 1st Infantry Division. The name painted on the tube was that of his Platoon Sergeant's wife, Danzill. He wanted me to be sure to let you all know that he didn't drop the puppy in the mortar tube. It was run over by a Jeep a few weeks after this picture was taken.

If you've got a photograph you think would be perfect for a *VG* cover, let us know.

Contents

As usual, we've got rounded up an eclectic bunch of articles, narratives, poetry and graphics for our readers. I decided to yield to the impulse to, once again, start off the issue with a piece by Paul Lyons—"Clinton, the Vietnam War, and the Sixties." Paul is terrific at setting a tone for the conversation between authors which we try to stage in laying out the journal.

It seemed natural to segue from a discussion of limitations of a contemporary politician to the exploration of the changing image of a Sixties-era President, so we follow Lyons with Michael B. Friedland's "New, Newer, Newest: The Transformation of Richard Nixon in the Popular Media, 1962-1968." Lest discussion of politicians grow too distant and theoretical, we yank readers back to the intersection between the political and the personal with Marc Adin's "Vietnam: Involvement and Vietnamization: An Odyssey of Deceit." Adin follows a short section of his own tour in Viet Nam during the war and matches it with press reports of battles in which he participated, giving us a graphic illustration of media manipulation of the truth.

We're fortunate to have the opportunity to present to you, in this issue, a remarkable collection of personal narratives gathered and introduced by Mike Meeropol. Mike, Barbara Epstein and Allen Young all describe their young adulthood in the Sixties, as "Red Diaper Babies." These papers were first presented at the 1994 *Sixties Generations Conference* (Danbury, CT; November 1994), and the text of the articles is followed by a transcription of the discussion which took place at the conference. Mike is the son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg and is a progressive political activist, Barbara is a feminist activist, and Allen is an activist for gay rights. All three were shaped by the politics of their parents and of the Old Left communities in which they were raised.

The Red Diaper section is followed by a series of essays which focus on the literature of the Viet Nam war,

beginning with David Willson's tongue-in-cheek discussion of Larry Heinemann's *Cooler by the Lake*. Edward F. Palm continues the discussion of canonical Viet Nam war literature in "The Vietnam that Never Was: *The Ugly American* as Intertextual Influence on *Going After Cacciato*." H. Bruce Franklin then reflects on why the works of W.D. Ehrhart have *not* taken their proper place in the canon in his "Introduction to W.D. Ehrhart's *Busted: A Vietnam Veteran in Nixon's America*."

R.S. Carlson's poem, "D.I." creates a fine transition from literature to military history, and we follow it with Peter Brush's essay on "The Vietnamese Marine Corps." We break again, with Pete Lee's short, hard-hitting poems and Dave Medlinsky's poetic period pieces. Then Kim Worthy gives us her reflections on yuppie sellouts in "'I Was *Evolving*': Dissent as Moral Death, Capitulation as Maturity in *Return of the Secaucus Seven, The Big Chill* and *Grand Canyon*." Two reflective fiction pieces, "Peacetime" by Tymoteusz Laskowski and "Sand" by Ronald J. Wichers, offer us portraits of working-class Sixties kids and the lives they've made for themselves.

And, for something completely different, J.-J. Malo interviews Dang Nhat Minh, the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Filmmaker's Association, reminding us that Americans are not the only people to shape perceptions of history with film. That we *do* shape history, however, is make clear by David Callaghan in "Whose Vietnam? The Representation of the Vietnamese in Oliver Stone's *Heaven and Earth*." Renny Christopher picks up on Callaghan's argument that Stone's representations of Vietnamese are essentially inadequate in her study, "Images of Vietnamese in American Film: The Mafia and the Super-Capitalists."

Cynthia Fuchs takes us to another side of the Sixties in an article about two recent African-American films—"'Bearing Arms Legitimately': *The Walking Dead* and *Panther*." There she explores two very different landmark representations of black men with guns. In the interview which follows, the director of *Panther*, Mario Van Peebles discusses his own attempt to represent recent history, the film *Panther*. We then present you with a remarkable document, a comic book written by Julian Bond in 1966, after he was expelled from the Georgia House of Representatives for opposing the war in Viet Nam. The comic book is powerfully illustrated by artist T.G. Lewis. We hope that this text can serve as a useful teaching aid. It is also available at our World Wide Web site, at this location: http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/sixties/.

We were lucky enough to secure two excellent essays on a little-discussed but important topic—the riots at Long Binh Jail in 1968. Building on a foundation provided by Katherine Kinney, John W. Williams studies press reportage of the riots and concludes that the lack of coverage of the event by the prestige press has essentially erased the event from history. Jack Crouchet offers a completely novel and more intimate perspective. Crouchet was a military judge stationed in Viet Nam and he presided over military courtrooms in which defendants accused of various crimes connected to the riots were tried. His article, "Riot at LBJ," is a combination of personal reflection and courtroom transcript from one particular soldier's court-martial. A familiar and depressing story, it is nonetheless remarkable for the perspective which it offers—I know of no other representation from a similar perspective.

We break again for a series of travelogues. The first, a narrative by Penelope Wickersham, takes us to Cuba in 1969, where she went to cut sugar cane with a group of young U.S. radicals who supported the Cuban Revolution. And then Viet Nam veteran Ann Kelsey takes us to present-day Cuba, telling us the story of her 1994 visit to attend the conference of the International Federation of Library Associations, and of her return visit to Viet Nam in that same year as a representative of a humanitarian group. Poetry by Christine A. Schultz is followed by Alan Farrell's "Thoughts on the Zouave Bridge, and Jim Lynch tells us all about convoy operations in Viet Nam.

Posed against each other, short poems by Claudia Conley and David Willson tell two very different stories of war. Sean Connolly follows with one of his mind-bending short stories, this one titled "Spelling Execution." Victor Bausch offers his sharply focused snapshots of scenes from the Viet Nam war, and Carolyn Thorman offers us a story of the postwar family troubles of a career military officer. Laurie Wagner Buyer's airy and elegant verses lift us for a short moment, and Edgar H. Thompson brings us back to earth with "The Nicest Killer I Ever Met," a Saigon barroom tale. Next, Frederick J. McGavran gives us a Viet Nam war story of the classic sort. Ray Melvin and William A. Wolf, Jr. offer poetry which reflects on memory and cultural myth. Victor Pearn's poem "Semper Fidelis" reminds us that today's proud marine graduate can be tomorrow's homeless veteran. Cortney Davis's "Flashback" poem tells the story of a Viet Nam veteran's wife, and Francesca J. Sidoti's "The Honeymooners" rewrites that story as a grand myth.

Back to military perspectives again, we present you with Del Pranke's "Situation Report," which reminds us of Marc Adin's piece in many ways—particularly the manner in which individual memory is juxtaposed against official records. Alan Farrell's poetry is written in the rhythms of the career NCO, harsh and funny.

Hoang To Mai's short story, translated by Nguyen Quoc Vinh, tells of school days in Viet Nam. Pham Van Ky's "Ba-De, or Her Doomed Family" is a tragic romance. And Nguyen Huy Thiep's "Remembrance of the Countryside," translated by Dana Sachs and Nguyen Van Khang, is the story of a village youth.

We jump back to the U.S. with M. Kettner's "The Hitchhiker's Graveyard," the tale of an Army deserter. April King's essay, "Wishing the Lightning" describes the first college course she ever took on the Viet Nam war, and the ways in which the class and the instructor made an impact on her life. Tim Page's "Back in the World" is the story of a soldier who can't come home, and it goes well with the short poem that follows—"Signs," by Davd Reeve. Stephanie Dickinson's poetry gives us a mix of imaginary war and real world, resonating nicely with the similar mix of reality and hallucination in Jim Janko's short short, "My Son."

We wrap up the issue with a review of Alfred Kazin's unpublished journals, by Michael J. Birkner, and a series

of reviews and book notices. Linh Dinh reviews Thanh T. Nguyen and Bruce Weigl's *Poems from Captured Documents*; Vince Gotera reviews Vivian Vie Balfour's edited collection, *Perimeters of Light: Short Fictions and Other Writing about the Vietnam War*; and Dan Duffy comments on Janet Gardner's video, *Viet Nam: Land of the Ascending Dragon*, David Graham DuBois' *...And Bid Him Sing*, Valerie Miner's *A Walking Fire*, and Rick Smolan and Jenniifer Erwitt's volume of photography, *Passage to Viet Nam*.

Graphic Arts

Here's a note from Steve on the illustrations you will find in this issue:

We've got even more Really Cool Stuff for you in this issue. In addition to the "mod" graphics that I liberated from DA PAM 750-31 (The M561/M792 Gama Goat: Operations and Preventative Maintenance)—and some of Uncle Sugar's other public domain attempts at appearing "with it," we're fortunate to have a special section containing an early antiwar comic book, courtesy of Julian Bond, who wrote the text. The comic was illustrated by T.G. Lewis.

The comic book speaks for itself (and a lot of other folks too). For the most part, the GI graphics just document a really bizarre attempt by the army to make mundane military stuff look like a cool way to impress scantily-clad women.

State of the Journal

This has been a period of large-scale production. In the space of two months, we prepared two double issues of the journal (6:3-4 and 7:1-2) and sent off nine books to the printer. Some of these books were ones we'd promised to publish a year or two ago, some are new projects. It was important to us to clear the backlog off our desks, get these books and journal issues out into the world, and then... start to sell them in order to continue to support our efforts. Though this issue was finished in June of 1995, we could not afford the printer's bill until December, which explains why we are once again late.

So you have some idea of what our costs are, let me tell you that rent, utilities, and basics like telephone bills, insurance (on the computers and our inventory) and office supplies run us approximately $2200 per month. We still don't take out salaries. To keep up with technology needs, we spend about $10,000 per year on computer hardware and software, including scanners, disk drives (you would not *believe* how much storage capacity color graphics require), monitors, layout and graphic software.

Though we have learned to be very canny about printing costs, production costs have gone up about 20% this year, due to an unfortunate 40% increase in paper costs. (Paper is 40% of the cost of the average printing job.) You will have doubtless noticed the drastic improvement in the appearance of our books and journal issues over the last couple of years—this does not come cheap, though we feel it's essential if we want our books to reach the widest possible public. Our book cover and graphic designers and artists cost us about $300 per book or journal issue these days, and we feel we're getting a real bargain.

An average length (96-102pp) poetry volume costs us about $3,500 to print 1200 copies. An average length journal issue (200pp) runs us about $3800 for 600 copies. An average course textbook (6"x9" format, 200pp) runs us about $3800 for a run of 1200 copies. This year it looks like we're going to have in excess of $35,000 in printer's bills. Pretty frightening.

We got a terrific addition to our grant from the Ford Foundation this spring, due to Dan's efforts in Viet Nam. It will help us pay printing costs for the two journal issues, (it's paying for part of this issue, in fact) but the rest of the funds are not allocated for printing costs. (They go to supporting translation projects, to covering a small amount of overhead for the *VG* office, and to supporting Dan's editorial visits to Ha Noi and his efforts to put Vietnamese intellectuals on-line.) Unfortunately, Dan is leaving us to pursue his own work in Southeast Asia, so we have lost his fund-raising capacity.

In order to continue to fund our publishing work, we need to sell a lot of books. Which means that you need to buy them. As *VG* supporters you need to sit down when planning a class and ask yourself, "Now, *which VG* book would best complement my reading list?" We publish these books so that you can use them—so please support us by being diligent in their use, or we won't be able to continue to produce new books.

We live in voluntary poverty to bring you these materials. We do it because we feel the effort is vital and because there's apparently no room *inside* the Academy for people like us, doing the work that we do. So if you value us and the materials we bring you, please do whatever you can to ensure our survival as an institution—use our books in your courses, make donations, review our publications in prestigious places, insist that your library subscribe, help us find funding opportunities. We can't make it without you.

—Kali Tal

A Note From Steve

It's been a rough couple of weeks; but I'd lay money that the work the three of us have done here would put any fifteen staffers from another publication out of the game for the duration. Outside of actual combat, I doubt the words "Improvise, Adapt, Overcome" have been applied with more relentless enthusiasm and downright deviousness than here at *VG*. We've used every last trick from *Sneaky Pete's Guide to Guerrilla Publishing* to get the job done, faster, with less hassle and better results. Hell, we even penciled in a couple new tricks in the margins.

And that's just the journal issues--the books are a whole 'nother story. There are seven book covers circling my desk in a holding pattern. They need to go to press before the end of next week. Eighteen hour work days are pretty much standard around here. Sundays. Holidays. We never close.

You sit back, and enjoy this issue—I think it's our best yet. I've got to get back to work.

—Steve Gomes

Clinton, the Vietnam War, and the Sixties

Paul Lyons, Stockton State College, Pomona, NJ 08240-9988. This paper was delivered at "The United States and Vietnam: From War to Peace Conference," University of Notre Dame, 3 December, 1993.

I want to focus attention on the ways in which responses to Bill Clinton's antiwar youth force us to come to grips with the legacy of our Indochina war and with the Sixties generation with which it remains associated. To do so, I would like to begin with two stories, the first of which you already know:

On Memorial Day, President Clinton spoke at the Wall before an audience which included a vocal minority of hecklers. To such critics, Clinton was insulting the memory of all who served; he was not only a draft-dodger, but a liar and a coward. Some turned their backs on him. Most of the crowd was more respectful, hearing the President reiterating Colin Powell's quoting of Lincoln—"With malice toward none and charity toward all," calling for a binding up of the nation's wounds.

My second story occurred later that same day in a small South Jersey town following its Memorial Day parade. The ceremonies included a color guard of veterans and several patriotic speeches, featuring local dignitaries. What was striking about the service was the invisibility of the Vietnam war. None of the color guard unit were Vietnam Era veterans; most were Korean or WWII vets. During perhaps 45 minutes of speechifying, all of which was conventionally patriotic, there was only a single mention of the Vietnam war, and that was as a part of a series of the wars we had fought. The keynote speaker, a local Republican politician, spoke about the ways in which the battle of Iwo Jima still speaks to us; it was an eloquent, impressive historical lesson. And yet—the speaker is a baby boomer. He did not serve in the military, he did not get sent to Vietnam. And yet he is a right-of-center conservative, characteristically hawkish, anticommunist—at least until the Berlin Wall came down.

I find the two stories paradigmatic of our continuing difficulties in, as Gerald Ford implored us to do almost twenty years ago, putting Vietnam behind us. We are stuck in the Sixties and a considerable part of that remaining presentness rests on the war; the other aspects I will also address below.

First, the efforts by Ford and others to get beyond Vietnam, the characteristic American tendency to view history, à la Henry Ford and Jay Gatsby, as irrelevant, has not worked. Second, the effort by others to transcend Vietnam, to depoliticize it, to establish one big tent within which antiwar activists, war vets, and mainstream patriots could heal the wounds, has had only partial success. The Vietnam Memorial, the Wall, is an extraordinary place; it comes the closest to transcending ideology by focusing on both the particularity of those who died and those who see their own faces reflecting off the black marble. But Clinton's rough experience on Memorial Day suggests that there is only so far that such transcendence can take us. Just consider another story, that of Katherine Ann Power's attorney, Steven Black, a Vietnam war pilot who staged a mock war crimes trial for himself, in which Power served as *his* attorney. He sentenced himself to community service at the same time he negotiated the terms of Power's surrender.

I believe that to begin to understand, not to speak of resolve, the pain and anger, the wounds still festering, we must reconfigure the involved parties. For much of the past decade, we have been stuck with an unfortunate dualism: those who served, increasingly admired as proles, blue-collar heroes versus those who protested, increasingly criticized as self-serving, hypocritical elitists. From Jim Webb's novels to Jim Fallow's influential article on social class and the draft, from *Platoon* to *China Beach*, the dualism has often *been* the politics of the war in recent years. It has a conservative and a liberal tint; the former tends to believe that we could and should have defeated Communist tyranny; the latter argues that it was, simply, a waste of American lives. The only opponents of the war granted respect in both scenarios are GIs, like John Kerry, and those protesters willing to go to jail for their beliefs (recall Myra MacPherson's important study, *Long Time Passing*).

We need, however, to begin with, not two, but at least three groups—those who fought, those who protested—and those who did neither. In *Class of '66: Living in Suburban Middle America* (Temple University Press, 1994) I provide a case study of such people, at least the males, mainstream baby boomers, most of whom supported the war, voted for Richard Nixon, but who found respectable, middle-class ways, i.e., the national guard and reserves, to avoid possible combat. It is this group who make my second story relevant; they are people who still tend to avoid the issue or, if more hawkish in their adulthood, be more defensive about their own behaviors. Are they Dan Quayles? Not quite, that wouldn't be fair. Few are as flat-out rich, few have been as baldly hypocritical. The flak that Clinton receives is in part a diversion of resentment away from those "silent majority" baby boomers who are uncomfortable with the legacy and, especially, the survivors of the war. In a similar sense, the mythos of the spitters at the airport waiting for returning vets allows us to avoid the ways in which mainstream people, and not only baby boomers, made Vietnam vets uncomfortable with their awkward silences. Instead of fixating on the noisemakers hissing the President, we need to pay attention to the silences of those who remain haunted by their passivity and insensitivity.

In making sense of the responses to Clinton, we need to emphasize that there is a right-wing agenda, a Sixties-bashing strategy, spearheaded by the Quayles and folks like Bill Bennett. Marilyn Quayle excoriated Sixties activists at the GOP Convention in Houston. She worked to reenforce another myth, that of the irresponsible, hedonistic Sixties radicals whose permissive behaviors ravage our culture. First of all, we need to make certain distinctions. Those who opposed the war fall into two camps:

radicals who saw the war as a symptom of American imperialism and liberals who viewed it as a tragic error. Among those radicals, there are splits over approach, levels of militancy. It is important to admit that many of the radicals romanticized the Vietnamese Communists, as they tended to romanticize all Third World liberation movements. This led them to some serious moral failings, some callousness toward human suffering and injustice committed by the Third World "Davids" against the American "Goliath." It's important for these self-criticism to be part of the story; Susan Sontag was, indeed, right to suggest that the radical press ignored or downplayed or rationalized Communist violations of human rights. Those of us who opposed the war, particularly from a radical, anti-imperialist stance, need to face our own blindness. What's most interesting about Clinton is that he was not part of that most radical, militant wing of the movement. He was a dove, an intern in Bill Fullbright's office, a "Clean for Gene," Simon and Garfunkel kind of guy; he probably never did inhale and certainly was aligned with those like Allard Lowenstein who sought to save the system by reforming it.

Those like Clinton who sought to make the system consistent with its own ideals in matters of opportunity, democratization, and human rights, who stood with Gene McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. need to directly challenge the Sixties-bashing from the Right. They not only have nothing to be embarrassed about; they have much to defend with pride.

The Quayles focus on partial truths. Yes, there was indulgence and permissiveness, yes, there was a mindless rebellion against authority, yes, there was some moral laziness. But—examine our world, how far we've come—an end to American apartheid, an enlargement of rights to African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, the disabled, women, gays. Okay, I know—we've got a long way to go. But those of us who remember Jim Crow, the problem that has no name, the time before anyone would even consider the possibility of the rights of gays in the military, must recognize the achievements generated by the Sixties. Almost every advance came out of the troublemakers, the agitators, the radicals of the era, as their ideas were absorbed by the Middle, diluted, softened, but integrated. Every survey of opinion sustains this achievement. To counter the real Vietnam Syndrome, to effectively address Sixties bashing, we must cherish our victories. My goodness, they're rare enough.

The New Right provides another segment of baby boomers, characteristically ignored by most observers. Indeed they came out of the Sixties stronger, for more of the long haul than did the New Left. As E.J. Dionne and others note, there are some striking similarities between New Left and New Right—a critique of the welfare state as bureaucratic and deadening, a call for liberty and community, a focus on the individual. We must credit the New Right with raising important questions about the dangers of the State and with persisting in a valuing of the role of markets in sustaining both human choice and economic efficiencies.

On the other hand, the New Right has consistently been resistant to the transformations which have moved the USA toward diversity, toward tolerance. Their criticisms of affirmative action, of political correctness, while often astute, are undermined by their suspect track record. Of course, it is a mark against the heirs of the New Left that they have allowed First Amendment rights to be so hypocritically co-opted by conservatives.

Regarding Vietnam, the New Right, the conservative movement also has much to confess. They ideologized a struggle with a particular history, insisting that Vietnam was merely an extension of Soviet or Chinese aggression. They played with martial rhetoric at the expense of untold lives. And, when it was crunch time, they did not stand up and be counted. No senior level officer, no insider who believed in invading the North, declaring war, calling up the reserves, nuking Hanoi—came forward and resigned his commission. And many who played hawk in later events, like Dick Cheney and Bill Bennett and Newt Gingrich, somehow managed, like the South Jersey politician in my second story, to avoid service.

And yet there is a compelling conservative issue, one that makes those on the Left uncomfortable, and one that helps to shape the response to Bill Clinton. It's made most eloquently by Jim Webb, John Wheeler and William Broyles: What is worth dying for? What does it say about a nation if it is uncomfortable with sacrifice, whether one is discussing national service or tax increases? One can interpret this challenge as particularly masculine. And in some ways I believe the ultimate gift of modern feminism is precisely a centering on what's worth living for. But the issue remains troubling, and its very nature seems to me to be part of what haunts Bill Clinton, who neither served nor took many risks as an activist, always, as his now famous letter states, maintaining his options.

In all of the above, we are considering elite opinion and behavior. In many ways, the legacy of the Sixties and of the Vietnam war rest on the rivalry between New Left and New Right elites, each seeking to persuade the mainstream of its case. The New Left, antiwar side has been charged with elite privileges, most sharply by Fallows' piece on Harvards and proles at the Cambridge draft board. Unfortunately, this truth about Vietnam, which Christian Appy appropriately calls a working-class war, seems to be walled off from its broader implications. It's as if Fallows and others discovered that this is a society with social class and racial privileges and then only applied this knowledge to the war. What is unusual, unique about the Sixties and Vietnam is that elite youth, in part, broke with their well-paved paths to success. Most elite youth did not become antiwar activists or even antiwar sideliners; they may have done some dope and grown longer hair, but they remained career oriented, often oblivious to the changes and challenges surrounding them, and used their social class advantages to either get deferments or to get into Guard or Reserve units.

At the heart of this dispute is the legacy of Tom Wolfe's notion of radical chic, the notion that affluent people who have a social conscience are morally suspect. Wolfe's cutting prose has been a significant factor in the virtual disappearance of political liberalism. One must agree with Wolfe that a politics of guilt generates wonderful material for a social satirist, from Leonard Bernstein

parties for Black Panthers to the political correctness of Antioch's dating rules. But such an essentially conservative and cynical posture, what one might also call the PJ O'Rourke School of Cultural Criticism, lets the country clubs and corporate board rooms off the hook. Most affluent people don't have bleeding hearts or generous wallets; they live in suburban cocoons, insulated from the squalor of American life. And most powerful people are merely economically correct. The Wolfean metaphor, which stretches to a fixation on yuppies and big chilled boomers, shifts the political and ideological ground from a focus on economic to cultural privilege, from power to status, from lives to lifestyles. Recall the assumption by voters, before the Convention, that Clinton was part of the elite, based on his Rhodes Scholarship, his Yale Law degree. He still suffers from this conservative framing which, at bottom, suggests that a New Class of intelligentsia, yackers, are our cultural elite, remote from mainstream values and behaviors, including patriotism and a commitment to service. Under this cultural framing, the billionaire Ross Perot becomes a populist.

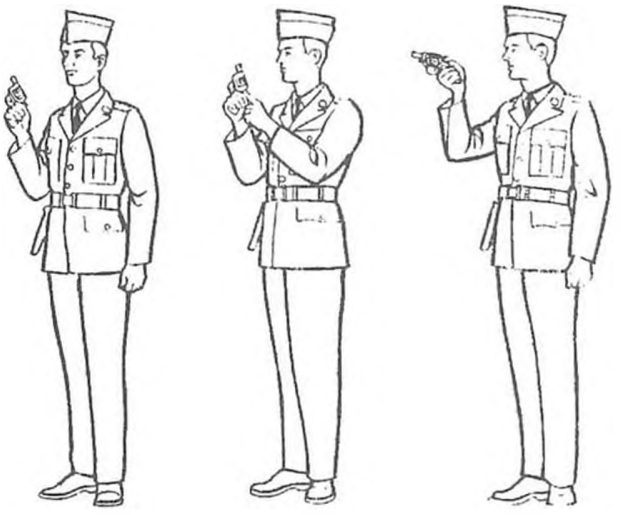
It remains essential to note the racial and gendered distortions of most considerations of the Vietnam war and the Sixties. Those who served, those who protested and those who did neither is a gendered way of conceptualizing a generation. Hillary Clinton now enters the foreground. She personifies the transformation which the Quayles and such have condemned; of course, Marilyn Tucker Quayle, finally, shares a Sixties story more with Mrs. Clinton than she does with her husband. And the recent Supreme Court decision on sexual harassment in the workplace, driven by two female justices and supported by the most conservative—Scalia and Thomas—suggests that the center has shifted to the left in terms of women's rights. We owe such shifts to those like Hillary Clinton, who have been in the forefront since the 1960s. What was once radical becomes mainstream.

Clinton's detractors juxtapose Colin Powell, Vietnam vet, with the Commander-in-Chief, reinforcing the conventional view that the working-class and minorities fought while the privileged protested and avoided service. Such an obvious truth should not be allowed to stigmatize those who sought to "bring our boys home," at least without attention being paid to those who simply took a hike, cultivating their private gardens. A strong case can be made that those who protested saved lives, both American and Indochinese. That should be a source of pride to Bill Clinton.

The issue of the Indochinese must be addressed; finally, the least satisfactory aspect of the ways in which we attempt to integrate the war and the decade with which it is associated, is the invisibility of "the other," those at some distance from our attention, those whose missing-in-action generate no protest, those whose veterans afflicted with post-traumatic stress syndrome pay the heaviest of prices, those who have had to struggle to build a nation following thirty-five years of warfare, those denied their claim to visibility—and honor—at the Wall.

It must be said plainly and forcefully—it is obscene for Americans to smugly criticize the Vietnamese for their economic screw-ups without at the same time paying attention to the ways in which the war brutalized their society and ravaged their landscape. This is not to return to a romanticization of the heroic Vietnamese; we surely know enough about the evils of communist dictatorship to resist that illusion. They, like all peoples, must be held accountable for their behavior. But so must we. Our obsession with the POW-MIA issue, our vengeful economic warfare upon the Vietnamese, which is finally beginning to soften, our resistance to the restoration of relations—we are like Tom and Daisy Buchanan going on with our lives oblivious to the destruction our thoughtlessness has wrought.

But we haven't been able to get on with our lives, to get past Vietnam, to heal the wounds. There's still too much hurt out there. This is what Bill Clinton needs to find a way to address. At his best, as a new kind of Democrat, he is able to understand the need to get past some of the worn-out rhetoric of both right and left, willing to see that we are in a new ballgame with new challenges. I admired him, standing there at the Vietnam Memorial last Memorial Day, but I was uncomfortable with him almost physically hiding behind Generals Powell and Jesse Brown, with his defensive if empathetic words. Why not stand proudly as an heir to the best of the Sixties, its refusal to reduce love of country to knee-jerk allegiance, its expansion of rights to all previously excluded groups, its rock'n roll spirit? He can be proud of what his segment of a generation has wrought and, at the same time, be generous and ecumenical, with those whose values have led them to other choices. He needs, as well, to continue to criticize the worst legacies of the Sixties, the righteousness and snobbery of the well educated. For Bill Clinton to win the respect of many, never all, of his critics, he needs to recognize that it's not enough to think about tomorrow; one must speak out on those traditions of the past which can help us get there.



NEW, NEWER, NEWEST: THE TRANSFORMATION of RICHARD NIXON IN THE POPULAR MEDIA, 1962-1968

Michael B. Friedland, The National Faculty, Southern Region, 200 Carondelet Street, Suite 1700, New Orleans, LA 70130-2900.

"And then there's the new Richard Nixon doll. You don't have to wind this one up. It just keeps running. And running. And running."

—Alan King, December 1967

Despite the thunder and lightning, and a soft but cold California rain, more than two thousand mourners filed through the old homestead at Yorba Linda to pay their last respects to Richard Milhous Nixon, thirty-seventh president of the United States. Eulogies offered up that April weekend emphasized forgiveness and balanced appraisals of the Nixon presidency, following the tone set by President Bill Clinton, who asked Americans to cease judging the departed on "anything less than his entire life and career."[1] While most politicians more than willingly complied in their own tributes, not wishing, perhaps, to speak ill of the dead, more than a few journalists followed suit, prompting criticism from their colleagues. "There was, after all, a reason he was the only president to resign the office," complained a reporter for the *Boston Globe*. "Somehow this seems to have gotten overlooked in the two weeks since he suffered his fatal stroke on April 18." David Halberstam was similarly critical. Nixon's "final campaign...to rehabilitate himself, to restore his good name, and to minimize Watergate" was done with "singular skill," and with much manipulation of the media.[2]

The transformation from surly, conniving, and self-absorbed politician to respected statesman in the twenty years since Watergate, while possibly the most dramatic of his checkered career, was hardly the first, a point *Newsweek* emphasized in its lead story on Nixon's life, "The Rise and Fall and Rise and Fall and Rise of Richard Nixon." In 1962, having been roundly defeated in the California gubernatorial election, he had lashed out at the print journalists, whining "like a bitter child" in what became known as his self-described "last press conference." Having thus self-destructed, went the popular story, his political career had all but ended, until 1968, when, against all conventional wisdom, he not only became the Republican candidate for the presidency, but won the election.[3]

The development of the myth of significance of the last press conference, in which Nixon had been saved from political oblivion in ways both curious and miraculous, owed much to Nixon's own version of it. "I wish I could analyze the workings of American democracy and the mystery of public opinion that took a man from 'finished' in 1963 [sic] to candidate for the Presidency in 1968," he mused in his preface to the 1968 edition of his autobiographical *Six Crises*. It was not due to his own calculation or efforts, he insisted, for no one, "not if he combined the wisdom of Lincoln with the connivance of Machiavelli, could have maneuvered or manipulated his way back into the arena."[4]

As usual, he was being less than candid. Several historians and journalists have convincingly argued that the former Vice President and presidential candidate was planning his return from politics almost immediately after the "last press conference" by supporting Republican candidates for office in the interim between 1962 and 1968; in so doing, he skillfully maneuvered himself into the position of the GOP front-runner against a variety of Democratic presidential hopefuls in the 1968 election—and from there, into the White House, thus supposedly confounding the media who had written him off.[5] Biographer Jonathan Aitken admitted that he had erred when, in 1966, he had come to the conclusion that Nixon did not have a future in politics, "at least in the judgment of contemporary journalism," yet then went on to propagate this error in his description of the aftermath of the 1962 defeat in a 1993 biography of the former president. After spending "five years in the political wilderness," Nixon's nomination in 1968 was "a triumph that astonished both his friends and foes."[6] To be sure, there were those commentators even in 1968 who used phrases like "miraculous feat," or the upward trajectory of his political fortunes rescued him from "almost total oblivion after his 1962 defeat," which added credence to the later depiction of his career as a series of triumphs and falls.[7]

Yet a study of news coverage of Richard Nixon in the popular media, spanning the years of alleged obscurity to the Republican National Convention in Miami illustrates that once the journalists and political observers had gotten over the attack on their character in 1962, few were ready to cast Nixon into political obscurity. One year after the "last press conference," reporters were talking seriously about whether Nixon would be a viable candidate against President John F. Kennedy in 1964; from that point on, Nixon was always treated as a serious contender. The tale of the press being blinded to Nixon's wiles may have some grain of truth to it if one is considering the treatment accorded him from the mid-1980's on, but it does not reflect press coverage from 1962 to 1968.

What the news stories did emphasize, however, was the transformation of the candidate. In the intervening years, Nixon appeared to have shed much of his combativeness and strident partisanship, in the process mellowing and looking like a statesman of the loyal opposition.[8] Even so harsh a critic as Norman Mailer was moved by the qualities the "new Nixon" displayed at the 1968 Republican National Convention. The candidate, he wrote, had been punished in his defeats in 1960 and 1962, and "that was on his face now, he knew the detailed schedule of pain in a real loss...." Unlike previous years, Nixon's modesty was genuine, and "not without real dignity." Perhaps, Nixon had only gone from being a bad actor to a good one; nonetheless, he had "risen and fallen and been able to rise again, and so conceivably had learned

something about patience and the compassion of others."[9] Journalist Theodore H. White, who had characterized Nixon as "one of life's losers," self-pitying, and banal in *The Making of the President, 1960*, described him in his third book dealing with a presidential campaign as deserving of great respect, for "there was about all he said, even in discussing the most hostile personalities, a total absence of bitterness, of the rancor and venom that had once colored his remarks." Mailer and White were not alone in their conclusions, nor, by 1968, were such views novel. As early as 1963, Nixon was rebuilding his political and popular image to convey an aura of maturity, respectability, and responsibility which, in the end, had much appeal for Republican moderates and was acceptable to a plurality of American voters, and was both reflected and reinforced in stories featured in three of the nation's most widely-read newsmagazines: *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*, as well as stories and editorials in *The New York Times*, none of which were staunch supporters of Nixon.[10]

Of course, much of the appeal that Nixon had in 1968—both among the electorate and the press—was due to the changes in the political climate that had occurred since the early 1960's, something over which Nixon had no control. He had begun the decade running against the young, attractive John F. Kennedy in 1960; seven years later, he was gearing up for a campaign against the unlovely, isolated, and unpopular incumbent, Lyndon Johnson. American society was being ripped apart by unrest on the college campuses, an increasingly militant civil rights movement, and, above all, the conduct of the war in Vietnam. The social and political upheaval generated as a result helped make Nixon more acceptable as a candidate. But this newfound acceptance came after a conscious reshaping of his image, particularly after the self-inflicted damage to his reputation after his embarrassing defeat in California in 1962. For not only had he become a two-time loser, but, as a result of his "last press conference," he was widely perceived as a bad loser as well.

The showdown with the press took place on the morning of November 7, 1962. Nixon, his face "haggard" and his eyes "flinty with rage," according to a *Newsweek* reporter, delivered a rambling monologue before assembled reporters the day after the election, venting his frustrations against the media for what he claimed was its biased reporting against him throughout the gubernatorial campaign.[11] "And as I leave the press," he announced, in an increasingly strident tone, "all I can say is this: for sixteen years...you've had a lot of fun—a lot of fun—that you've had an opportunity to attack me and I think I've given as good as I've taken....But as I leave you I want you to know—just think about how much you're going to be missing. You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore, because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference...." Accepting that journalists could be critical enough of a candidate to consciously "give him the shaft," he suggested that editors at least "put one lonely reporter on the campaign who will report what the candidate says now and then."[12]

As reporter Jules Witcover later wrote, the harangue was, "in the judgment of any experienced political observer worth his salt, the funeral oration over the political remains of Richard M. Nixon...the public act of hari-kari of the century" which revealed that there was no "old" or "new" Nixon, only the "real Nixon," who had revealed himself to be the "whining, petty, patronizing political hack that most of the press always had thought him to be." One reporter described his departure as "exit snarling"; James Reston of the *New York Times* editorialized that Nixon had considerable political gifts, but had become too concerned with the machinery of politics to make good use of them; in the end, he was "beyond journalism now and will have to be left to the historians and the psychological novelists."[13]

Reston was not alone in this assumption which quickly became the conventional wisdom. It was the "most extraordinary farewell in modern political history," noted *Newsweek*, adding that "with his fourteen year political career shattered...it is perhaps understandable that Richard Nixon needed a scapegoat" in the press.[14] "[B]arring a miracle," *Time* eulogized, "his political career ended last week. He was only 49....Perhaps he had risen too far too fast." Nixon's "worst enemies agreed that he was capable, yet they insisted that his character was flawed. As of last week, his admirers could only agree" after he had written "his own political obituary....in words that were to small of spirit to make for real tragedy."[15] Only *U.S. News and World Report* was cautious in tone, suggesting only that Nixon "has stepped out of politics—at least for the time being," adding only that his exit "came on a bitter note."[16] Elsewhere, the newsmagazine was sympathetic, running a story describing how Nixon had tried for years to woo the press, which had never been inclined to treat him with much respect or affection, and, in the end, Nixon finally "let go."[17]

In actuality, the "last press conference" was not all that damaging to the former Vice President. His relations with the press had never been especially good, not when he served under President Dwight Eisenhower, nor when he campaigned on his own for the nation's highest office in 1960. Besides, while the "eastern liberal" news establishment may have been shocked by the harsh tones, attacks on the national "liberal press" played well in the more conservative parts of the country. Several journals and newsmagazines, not all of them conservative, tacitly accepted the validity of Nixon's concerns by scrutinizing the objectivity of the press in lengthy articles.[18] Some reporters believed, out of their "own sense of self-importance," as Stephen Ambrose has described it, that Nixon, by attacking the press, was through, because, in their opinion, nobody "could do that and survive in American politics," and so "Nixon had burned his bridges behind him."[19] Even the Democrats who hoped to make political capital out of the alleged "blow-up" in the midst of the press conference by showing reruns of it if Nixon ever emerged as a candidate found that it was not as much of an uncontrolled outburst after all. He had peppered his attack on the press with so many comments about how he appreciated the press coverage,

and how the reporters were writing the story as they saw it, that "no one clip could be isolated" to confirm anyone's memory of the "blow-up," as Hubert Humphrey's public relations advisors found to their chagrin in 1968.[20]

If anything illustrated the fact that Nixon still had enough popularity to be a political contender, so soon after being dismissed as such, was the negative response generated by an ABC documentary entitled "The Political Obituary of Richard M. Nixon," which aired only five days after his defeat in California. Moderator Howard K. Smith had interviewed several of Nixon's past political opponents as well as former State Department official Alger Hiss, whom Nixon had investigated during his freshman year in Congress, and whose conviction on perjury had catapulted the young congressman into the national spotlight. Hiss insisted that his old nemesis had been motivated more by politics than by any objectivity regarding the facts.[21]

Angry viewers deluged the network with almost 80,000 telegrams and letters denouncing Hiss' comments and ABC for giving him a forum in which to air them; former President Dwight Eisenhower and network sponsors were similarly critical.[22] *Time* described the "hastily assembled" show as "pure tastelessness," adding for good measure that Smith had only recently been let go from by CBS "because of his unconquerable tendency to overeditorialize."[23] Smith had "come to bury Nixon, not to praise him," ran one article in *Newsweek*. "But somehow it didn't work out that way. Thousands of Americans were ready to bury Smith." Nixon reveled in the fact that, in his words, the attack made by "one convicted perjurer" meant nothing when compared with the thousands of messages of support from "patriotic Americans."[24]

What probably meant more to Nixon were the observations made by conservative and liberal political observers alike that "Hiss' participation in the graveside rites might help resurrect Nixon," as David Lawrence of *U.S. News and World Report* put it.[25] Yet as President John F. Kennedy and his cabinet basked in the successful conclusion of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Nixon looked toward 1968 as the earliest opportunity to successfully wrest the presidency from the incumbent. But he would put the foundations down now. As early as the spring of 1963, he was making himself into a member of the loyal opposition, questioning Kennedy's pledge not to invade Cuba as part of the missile crisis' settlement in off-the-record speeches in front of Republican businesspersons, holding press conferences, and meeting with the leaders of the Republican National Committee. Trying to soften his image, Nixon appeared on Jack Paar's television show in March 1963, playing a piano piece of his own composition, and bantering with his host about the political fortunes of the Kennedy family.[26] "Richard Nixon arose from the wreckage of his political career—and found that life after all is not just a bed of razor blades," according to *Time*. He had received "warm applause in after question-and-answer sessions in private clubs" in New York and Chicago, where he also held a "jovial press conference." For the former candidate, who insisted he would "never again run for public office," it had been "an immensely pleasurable week."[27]

At the same time, while claiming not to be a candidate, he pledged to "support and campaign enthusiastically" for whichever presidential candidate the Republican Party nominated in 1964: New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, Governor William Scranton of Pennsylvania, or George Romney, governor of Michigan. *Newsweek* was less than convinced. "With his reemergence last week," a lead article read, "Dick Nixon may not be shooting for the Presidency, but he hardly looked the subject of a political obituary."[28] It was plain to all observers that "Mr. Nixon is back in politics with both feet," observed *U.S. News and World Report*, "But to what purpose?" Admittedly, "[f]ew think that Mr. Nixon will seek the Presidency again," but perhaps he would make himself a "Republican kingmaker" who would be the political powerbroker behind the scenes.[29] Walter Cronkite, of CBS News, was less reserved, and more skeptical about Nixon's claims once the former candidate announced that he and his family were moving from California to New York City, surmising that the real reason was that he wished to "establish a base for another try at the Presidency."[30]

Nixon's first public sally against the administration came in April 1963, when he criticized it for its policies regarding Cuba, coexistence with Communists, and containment in an address before the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington, D.C.[31] As Stephen Ambrose has argued, Nixon's insistence on a free Soviet Union, as well as his contradictory call to do whatever was needed to force the Soviets out of Cuba, without mounting an invasion, was inconsistent and irresponsible, but "being in opposition...freed Nixon to slash and denounce without having to assume any responsibility for his words."[32] Nonetheless, the speech was well-received by the editors, who applauded his rationale for his outburst at the press the previous November, when he explained that he "felt like returning for sixteen minutes some of the heat I had been taking for sixteen years."[33] Some listeners thought they detected a "new, new Nixon," an individual more relaxed and less intense than before. Despite his protestations to the contrary, a reporter from the *Los Angeles Times* wrote that several in the audience were heard to voice their opinion that Nixon sounded like a man still interested in the presidency.[34] Most heartening was the reception given the speech. *The New York Times* reprinted the entire text, thus tacitly refuting the notion that Nixon as a political figure had been written off; *U.S. News and World Report* published excerpts.[35]

These and other efforts kept his name in the news as the "oracle of the Republican Party," as *Newsweek* dubbed him, and as he intensified his criticisms of the Kennedy Administration for being, essentially, soft on Communism in Cuba, the media began to hint broadly that Nixon might, once again, take on John Kennedy in the 1964 presidential race as a compromise candidate should the Republicans be deadlocked between the moderate wing led by Rockefeller, and the non-eastern conservatives represented by Goldwater. As if to back up

such predictions, a Harris poll indicated that among all the current Republican hopefuls, a majority of Republican voters across the nation would support Nixon against Kennedy.[36] Despite his insistence "that he has no immediate plans for a return to national office," noted *Time* a year after writing his political obituary, "Richard Nixon seems to be the Republican whom everybody is talking about for his party's 1964 presidential nomination."[37]

The former Vice President downplayed such talk, telling reporters that he planned to stay out of the internecine party warfare until it was resolved at the nominating convention, after which time he would throw his support behind the Republican candidate. "It's a rugged fight. This is not unusual. We already have seen bloodletting. There'll be some more blood spilled before it's over," he said. "I want to see the Republicans have their arguments, but settle them without burning their bridges behind them." Goldwater, for his part, felt Nixon's comment was "one of the most unfortunate statements that has been made lately," and, after insisting that he was not the one drawing blood, discounted Nixon's claims that he had no design on the party nomination. "It's obvious as the day is long that something is on the move with Mr. Nixon."[38]

Nor was Goldwater alone in his suspicions; Rockefeller was also said to have noted "the gleam in Nixon's eyes."[39] In an interview with Walter Cronkite, Nixon admitted that if there was a deadlock at the San Francisco convention, there would be calls for other Republicans, including himself. "Thus Richard M. Nixon wiggled himself into the ranks of the non-candidates," wrote an amused reporter for *Newsweek*, "who aren't running, mind you, but remain more or less available for a draft."[40] *U.S. News and World Report* took the prospect of a Nixon candidacy more seriously. He was "just as acceptable to [the liberal] wing of the party in 1964 as he was in 1960....And in 1960, he was equally acceptable to Republicans in other parts of the nation....He does not arouse the antagonisms that are stirred by Senator Goldwater and Governor Rockefeller." If he were given a second chance, "a good many Republicans now are saying that they believe Mr. Nixon could beat President Kennedy," stressing that Kennedy's margin of victory in 1960 was slim indeed.[41]

Although Republicans around the nation reported that Nixon was urging party leaders not to commit themselves to anyone too soon, for no one could yet tell what would happen at the convention, Nixon did nothing to encourage this sentiment.[42] He was willing to accept any role his party gave him, he announced in the spring of 1964, and if the GOP did select him as a candidate, President Lyndon Johnson "would know he'd been in a fight."[43] Nixon was, however, working behind the scenes, unsuccessfully trying to encourage other Republicans to run against what was turning into a Goldwater steamroller. Once the Arizona senator was chosen at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, Nixon, despite his private misgivings at the extremism that Goldwater both encouraged and did not denounce, threw his support completely behind him, unlike fellow Republicans Romney, who refused to support Goldwater, and Rockefeller, who refused to stir himself.[44] He campaigned around the country on Goldwater's behalf, calling for all Republicans to join the "ministry of party unity," get to work, and win the election. "I want all Republicans to win," he explained. "I am just as strong for a liberal Republican in New York as I am for a conservative Republican in Texas."[45]

In describing his strong speeches on behalf of the Republican candidates in the 1964 elections, *Time* sounded almost a wistful note. "With Nixon hitting the hustings for Goldwater, many people couldn't help but think of what might have been. If Nixon had stayed out of the 1962 California gubernatorial contest (or won it), he might well be running against Johnson today."[46] But it had not worked out that way, and Nixon found himself traveling throughout the country in an exercise of frustration and futility, knowing full well that the Republican party was going down in defeat, having lost the support of moderates who were scared off by Goldwater or his supporters among right-wing extremists. In the election, Johnson received 61% of the popular vote and 486 electoral votes to Goldwater's 39% and 52 electoral votes; Democrats won two seats in the Senate, and thirty-eight seats in the House.[47] It was a devastating blow to the Republican Party, but "wonderfully profitable to [Nixon] personally," as Stephen Ambrose described it, for Nixon had collected many political IOU's from Republican candidates, and Goldwater, the party's standard-bearer, had done poorly.[48]

There were other bonuses as well. "The old clichés about the "old" or "new" Nixon are irrelevant now," charged a conservative columnist. "He has always been the same, essentially conservative, and a supporter of the Republican Party in victory and defeat." The contrast between him and the neutralism of Romney and the restraint of Rockefeller "will not be forgotten. Nixon's role in the future of the Republican Party and his image before the nation is a statesman of the first rank will be assured."[49] Nixon himself instinctively understood this. Shortly after the election, he told a reporter that in order for the Republican party to avoid another similar debacle four years later, it must appeal to the moderates, and choose a centrist leadership which would "make a place for all responsible points of view," but would reject right-wing extremist views. Nixon, not coincidentally, reminded all who would listen that he considered himself "dead center," and announced that he planned to devote much of his time to politics in the coming months.[50]

Those months were to be happy ones. As one of his biographers related, "he held no office and was running for none, yet was able to spend almost full time on politics." Not only was his law practice in New York lucrative, but it was not time consuming, thus freeing himself up for campaigns on behalf of other Republicans.[51] Reporters consistently described him as more mellow and mature than he had been in 1962 and before. "Leaner these days and more relaxed," noted *Newsweek*, "Nixon is losing the lowering, blue-jawed look....Flecks of softening gray have appeared in the renowned 5 o'clock shadow...." As he walked down Fifth Avenue, he "beamed" when strangers spoke to him by name, and

"chuckled" when others "did double-takes at seeing his face."[52] And that "cartoonist's delight of a face" was now "softened around the well-barbered edges," and "his suits no longer resembl[ed] refugees from the rack, his wary, darting eyes somehow mellower." One woman was even heard to exclaim when she saw him in person, "He's become so much *cuter*," probably one of the few times that adjective had ever been used to describe Richard Nixon.[53]

James Reston, who had written one of Nixon's political obituaries in 1962, described the "New Nixon" as "a little heavier, a little more relaxed, a little wiser, and a lot richer than the tense and painfully suspicious young man who served two terms as Vice President."[54] John Herbers, also writing for *The New York Times*, wrote that on campaign swings through the Midwest, Nixon "appears relaxed, friendly and articulate. His face is tanned from standing in the sun and he looks as if he is enjoying it all."[55] When questioned about his grueling pace, Nixon told reporters, "I think I do better in adversity than when I am living off the fat of the land."[56] The light touch—which included jokes at the expense of the Democrats—was mandatory, and a marked departure from the earnestness of earlier days. "I'm convinced that people look upon their political leaders as celebrities. They come as much to be entertained as to be informed," he explained. "[Adlai] Stevenson saw that and did it brilliantly, but he was before his time. He'd have done better in the '60s than he did in the '50s."[57]

The light touch did not mean a lessening of his attacks on the Johnson Administration's conduct of the Vietnam War, however, and Nixon continually hammered at what he considered to be its weakness and lack of resolve in pressing the war to victory through a military quarantine, and use the considerable air and sea power at hand to destroy enemy bases in North Vietnam and Laos, while the South Vietnamese could manage the ground fighting. In every speech, Nixon employed all the Cold War rhetoric in his arsenal to explain why the battle for South Vietnam was the battle for Asia and freedom. *Time* and other publications devoted much space to his speeches, giving the distinct impression that he was *the* Republican spokesman on foreign policy.[58]

It was clear that this was his intention, and that he was proffering help to Republican congressmen in the 1966 election to build up support for the 1968 presidential campaign.[59] After hearing the standard speech, Des Moines Republicans, who gave him a standing ovation, nevertheless conceded that his audience remained a national one. "I'd say he was running for President,' said one local GOP leader. 'He was talking more for publication than for the people here." As Nixon met with people at a private home in Des Moines, a reporter noted that a copy of his memoirs, *Six Crises*, was "laying conspicuously on a table....Clearly the old warrior was eager for a seventh."[60] After a third trip to Southeast Asia in eighteen months followed by the normally hectic round of speeches and television appearances, wrote a reporter in *U.S. News and World Report*, there was "increased speculation that the former Vice President is emerging as a probable Republican candidate in 1968."[61] *The New York Times Magazine* believed his prospects to be hopeful; even Republican columnist Emmet John Hughes, no Nixon admirer, conceded that he could be a candidate in 1968, even if there existed the "towering improbability of his winning the Presidency in 1968...."[62] According to *Newsweek*,

> it's as plain as the nose on his face that Nixon's eye is on the White House, and that he is following the only possible course for a two-time loser without a big home-state delegation to call his own or an army of zealots in the field. He is going door-to-door, marketing his only asset: Richard Nixon....it often seems that Nixon is using '66 as an audition for a race against LBJ.

The election results were gratifying to Nixon and the Republican party as a whole, for they had picked up three seats in the Senate, forty-seven House seats, eight governors, and over five hundred seats in state legislatures. Nixon claimed that this "meant the revitalization of the two-party system,"[63] but it also meant his own revitalization, for he had "brought himself back from the humiliation of the 1962 California governor's race" through "hard work, effrontery, loyalty to the GOP [and] luck" to make himself the "leader of the loyal opposition."[64]

Reports of Nixon's political demise had no doubt been premature. But he had not yet acquired complete vindication as the official front-runner for the Republicans, and there always lurked the question, as *Newsweek* phrased it, whether "his destination is another crack at the White House in 1968 or another quick trip to that affluent obscurity the GOP provides for its never-has-beens."[65] To avoid the latter, and erase the stigma of being a "two-time loser," Nixon needed not only his party's nomination, but a victory. To accomplish this, he had to rebuild relations with the press, for even if he could not get their support, he needed their respect, or, at worst, apathy. Poor relations with the press had hurt him in 1960; he would not make that mistake again. The means to achieve these goals would be improved relations with the press, and the further emergence of a new, more mellow Nixon.

The road to rapprochement began in the heady days after the 1966 elections. "The press are good guys," he explained to journalist Jules Witcover. "They're oriented against my views. But I like the battle....I used to be too serious about it. Now I treat it as a game. I'm probably more relaxed, and not so much is riding on it....I have a lot of friends in the press." Reporters' questions were "always tough," he added, "but they're more responsible, more objective, since California. After '62, the press could have said, 'Let's give it to the SOB.' But they didn't do it." According to Witcover, the last observation rang true. Throughout the campaign, the press conferences had been models of "mutual deference." The campaigner was "an egg-walker before the press, and in turn he always received more than the customary courtesy...."[66]

This courtesy extended to generally favorable coverage of his trips abroad in 1967, for, as an international figure, he carried himself "as if he were leader of the opposition," a role that the press readily ascribed to him.[67] All the newsmagazines viewed him as a contender for the upcoming campaign, despite his disavowals that

he planned to run for President in 1968.[68] "No one need doubt that Richard M. Nixon is running, despite his cautious avowal that he won't have anything to say on the matter for some months," began a story in *Time*. "The fact is, he has been running all over the world" to, in his own words, "make him the nation's 'best-informed private citizen on world affairs."[69]

By the time he officially announced his candidacy in January 1968, few were surprised. Johnson's popularity had been slipping, due to urban unrest, the continued war in Vietnam, and proposals to increase the income tax, and several Republicans had entered the fray.[70] Concerned with the popularity of other candidates such as Ronald Reagan and Nelson Rockefeller, Nixon implemented his strategy to win over the press by shedding his image of the conniving "Tricky Dick," the durable name bestowed upon him by his Democratic rival for the Senate in 1950. "[A]s usual," wrote Stephen Ambrose, Nixon "indulged in overkill," giving his plan the name "Operation Candor."[71] Not only would he tell the press about the speeches he was to give throughout the country, he would outline how he would adapt the speeches to suit specific regions and candidates, telling a journalist at one point that he occasionally made favorable comments about opposition candidates because "it's a device, of course, to show I'm fair-minded." Nor was Nixon satisfied "with the *act* of candor; he always had to hang a clear label on it" to show that he was "being untricky." Speeches were peppered with phrases such as "to be perfectly candid," "putting it bluntly," and "speaking quite frankly."[72]

Such approaches had their perils. "In making himself more accessible to reporters," a Nixon aide wrote, "he has also made himself more visible, and what is perceived is Nixon the Manipulator, the man of technique, not of substance."[73] To be sure, *Newsweek* was not alone in complaining that Nixon's campaign as having "all the spontaneity of a calculating machine."[74] Some journalists viewed with disdain "The Speech," an "all-purpose Nixon sampler" which was his standard performance wherever he went.[75] ("He reminds me of a trained chimpanzee," grumbled columnist Joseph Alsop at a Minneapolis rally in October 1968. "I keep waiting for him to scratch himself.")[76]

Although the slickness of the operation was never ignored, neither was the transformation of a "new, new Nixon," or, as the *Baltimore Sun* offered, a reinvigorated and "Renewed Nixon."[77] Behind the "marionette gestures on hundreds of campaign stages and the calculated postures in the television studios, there was evidence of a more mellow and more mature Richard Nixon," noted *Time*.[78] Nixon himself viewed such discussions as a definite asset. "It's been talked about so much that now I've got the underdog thing going for me. People are learning that I don't have horns."[79] *Newsweek* even compared his style favorably with that of John Kennedy in 1960; Nixon could not only "pat a child's head with genuine warmth [and] autograph the cast on a booster's broken arm," but could "even draw Kennedy-style squeals of delight from excited college girls." One New Hampshire coed was described as "gushing" when she explained that she was for Nixon because the candidate "talked with us as though he was our next-door neighbor. He took an interest in us and I think he takes the same interest in the American people."[80]

Much of the favorable press coverage he received was due to the improved relations he had with the press, although he could never be considered "chummy with reporters."[81] "You can almost see Nixon telling himself, 'Be nice to the press, be nice to the press,'" said a reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*. "And he is." "I feel like a traitor for saying this," another commented, "but I find him quite likable." Mike Wallace of CBS News explained that Nixon was "more relaxed. He's more accessible. He's more fun." Nixon himself viewed press relations philosophically, admitting that it would never be "a love affair" as some reporters had with Kennedy, "but I would like to have their respect, if not their affection."[82]

He received much of it. Columnist Walter Lippmann, who had not been a fan of Nixon's, wrote a month before the election that he believed that "there really is a 'new Nixon,' a maturer and mellower man who is clawing his way to the top...."[83] *Time*, which had written Nixon off as a political force six years earlier, concurred, albeit with qualifications. The "real Richard Nixon" had finally displayed himself to the people in 1968, and "he turned out to be neither the blue-jawed gutter-fighter of myth and memory," although he was not "the calm, deliberate statesman of his supporters' romantic reveries," either. "The real Nixon is a technician, probably the foremost political craftsman of the day.[84]

As it turned out, this was not an inaccurate assessment, yet it was not only Nixon's supporters who had come to consider him as the mature, responsible statesman of the GOP. Many in the press had come to view him in similar terms, especially as he seemed to warm to the press. Whatever the election results meant to the American people, Nixon's victory did not come as a surprise to the press, most of whom had never entirely believed in his political demise in the early 1960's. The improved relations with the press were not to last, however. "Don't take it personally," he told reporters in 1969, "but I'm not going to pay that much attention to you." To aides, he described the press simply as "the enemy."[85] In the end, journalists would come to view the President in similar terms. After 1974, when Nixon had resigned, no one believed that Nixon would ever regain their favor. Once again, as after that bitter press conference in November 1962, he confounded expectations by making allies of them one last time, this time not to resurrect his political career, but his public image. By most accounts, he succeeded.[86]

Notes

1 "See Dick Run," *Newsweek* 70 (December 25, 1967): 17.

2 Quoted in *The Boston Globe*, April 28, 1994.

3 Mark Feeney, "Whitewashed Stonewalling: No More Mr. Bad Guy for Richard Nixon?" *The Boston Globe*, May 1, 1994; David Halberstam, "Richard Nixon's Last Campaign," *Columbia Journalism Review* 33 (July/Au-

gust 1994): 36. Other journalists were even harsher in their criticism of the press for its deferential tone towards Nixon even earlier. See Marie Shear, "Nixon Rises Again (and It's Your Fault, You Fools!)" *Washington Journalism Review* 11 (April 1989): 44-45; for a defense of the revisionist view, see Paul Johnson, "In Praise of Richard Nixon," *Commentary* 86 (October 1988): 50-53.

[4] "The Rise and Fall and Rise and Fall and Rise of Richard Nixon," *Newsweek* 123 (May 2, 1994): 24-29.

[5] Richard Nixon, Preface to the 1968 edition, *Six Crises* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1968), p. xvii.

[6] Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon, Volume Two: The Triumph of a Politician, 1962-1972* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), pp. 11-176, *passim*; Jules Witcover, *The Resurrection of Richard Nixon* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970); Tom Wicker, *One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream* (New York: Random House, 1991), pp. 6, 267-344.

[7] Jonathan Aitken, *Nixon: A Life* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing Co., 1993), pp. 1, 307.

[8] "President Nixon: What Will He Be Like?" *Time* 72 (November 11, 1968): 36; "In Search of Political Miracles," *Time* 72 (July 26, 1968): 22.

[9] This was not, of course, the first emergence of a "new Nixon"; supporters and critics alike had commented on how the often vituperative Vice-President had calmly and moderately dealt with the crisis surrounding President Dwight D. Eisenhower's heart attack in 1955, and had also mellowed somewhat as a presidential candidate five years later. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon: The Education of a Politician, 1913-1962* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 371-377.

[10] Norman Mailer, *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1968), p. 44.

[11] Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1960* (New York: Athenaeum, 1961), pp. 65-66, 301-306; Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1968* (New York: Athenaeum, 1969), p. 148. The earlier depiction did not keep Nixon from seeking White out in 1968 as part of his resurrection campaign on behalf of a "new Nixon." It worked. "I lacerated Nixon in the 1960 book," admitted White in 1968, "and I'm astounded that he would see and treat cordially any man who had hurt him so much." "He's More Fun," *Newsweek* 71 (March 18, 1968): 69.

[12] David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pp. 62, 363-376, 663-665.

[13] "Not Nixon," *Newsweek* 60 (November 19, 1962): 31.

[14] *The New York Times*, November 8, 1962; see also "You Won't Have Nixon to Kick Around," *Newsweek* 60 (November 19, 1962): 32.

[15] Witcover, *Resurrection*, p. 16; *The New York Times*, November 8, 1962; James Reston, "A Tragic Story," *The New York Times*, November 8, 1962.

[16] "Not Nixon," p. 31.

[17] "California: Career's End," *Time* 80 (November 16, 1962): 28.

[18] "Nixon Bows Out: Has Last News Conference," *U.S. News & World Report* 53 (November 19, 1962): 19.

[19] "Untold Story of Nixon and the Press," *U.S. News and World Report* 53 (November 26, 1962): 49.

[20] Ibid., pp. 46, 49; White, *Making of the President, 1960*, pp. 274-275; Patrick J. Sloyan, "The Place is Forever Duller Without Him," *American Journalism Review* 16 (June 1994): 12-13; "Mr. Nixon and the Press, *The Nation* 195 (November 17, 1962): 318-319; "Press Role Debated After the Election," *The Christian Century* 79 (November 21, 1962): 1407; "Undesired Kiss," *Time* 80 (November 23, 1962): 68.

[21] Ambrose, *Triumph of a Politician*, p. 12.

[22] Garry Wills, *Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-Made Man* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970), p. 416.

[23] "Untold Story," p. 46; "How Dare You? A. Hiss on TV," *Newsweek* 60 (November 26, 1962): 56.

[24] "How Dare You?" p. 56; "Tasteless Post-Mortem: Alger Hiss on TV Panel Discussion," *Time* 80 (November 23, 1962): 69; E. McDowell, "The State of Howard K. Smith," *The National Review* 13 (December 31, 1962): 511-512.

[25] "Tasteless Post-Mortem," p. 69.

[26] "How Dare You?" p. 56.

[27] Quoted in Ibid.

[28] "Nixon's New Role: What Will It Be?" *U.S. News and World Report* 54 (March 25, 1963): 24; "Re-Enter Nixon," *Newsweek* 61 (March 18, 1963): 24.

[29] "Back to Life," *Time* 81 (March 15, 1963): 23.

[30] Ibid.

[31] "Nixon's New Role," p. 24.

[32] *The New York Times*, May 3, 1963.

[33] *The New York Times*, April 21, 1963.

[34] Ambrose, *Triumph of a Politician*, p. 20.

[35] *The New York Times*, April 21, 1963.

[36] Witcover, *Resurrection*, pp. 48-49.

[37] *The New York Times*, April 21, 1963; *U.S. News and World Report* 54 (May 6, 1963): 20.

[38] "That Bug, That Presidential Bug," *Newsweek* 62 (October 28, 1963): 17-18; see also "Compromise Candidate: Nixon's Name Arises Again," *U.S. News and World Report* 55 (August 12, 1963): 10.

[39] "Something on the Move?" *Time* 82 (November 22, 1963): 17.

[40] Ibid.

[41] "That Bug," p. 18.

[42] "Let's Suppose," *Newsweek* 63 (February 3, 1964): 18.

[43] "Will It Be Nixon vs. Kennedy Again in '64?" *U.S. News and World Report* 55 (November 25, 1963): 34.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Witcover, *Resurrection*, pp. 85-86.

[46] *The New York Times*, June 14, 1964.

[47] Quoted in Witcover, *Resurrection*, p. 101.

[48] "Return to the Wars," *Time* 84 (October 9, 1964): 26.

[49] *The New York Times*, November 4, 1964.

[50] Ambrose, *Triumph of a Politician*, p. 57.

[51] Raymond Moley, "Nixon's Role in 1964," *Newsweek* 64 (October 26, 1964): 124.

[52] *The New York Times*, November 11, 1964.

[53] Ambrose, *Triumph of a Politician*, p. 59.

[54] "Non-Candidate Nixon," *Newsweek* 63 (February 24, 1964): 20-21.

[55] "Nixon and the GOP: Comeback?" *Newsweek* 68 (Oc-

tober 10, 1966): 32.

[56] *The New York Times*, September 16, 1966.

[57] *The New York Times*, September 24, 1966.

[58] *The New York Times*, February 10, 1966.

[59] "Nixon and the GOP," p. 33.

[60] See, for example, "Now, We Can," *Time* 85 (February 5, 1965): 21.

[61] "Nixon: '66 Campaigner With '68 in Mind," *U.S. News and World Report* 61 (September 5, 1966): 12; "Can Romney Stop Nixon in '68?" *U.S. News and World Report* 61 (July 25, 1966): 31.

[62] "On the Road," *Newsweek* 66 (September 27, 1965): 27-28.

[63] "Nixon on the Move: Is His Eye on '68 Campaign?" *U.S. News and World Report* 59 (September 27, 1965): 19.

[64] "Over-Nominated, Under-Elected, But Still a Promising Candidate," *The New York Times Magazine* (April 29, 1965): 14-15; Emmet John Hughes, "The Next Chief of the GOP," *Newsweek* 66 (November 29, 1965): 19.

[65] "Nixon and the GOP," p. 32; see also "Will It Be Nixon vs. LBJ in '68," *U.S. News and World Report* 61 (October 3, 1966): 54-58.

[66] *The New York Times*, November 13, 1966.

[67] Ambrose, *Triumph of a Politician*, p. 100.

[68] "Nixon and the GOP," p. 30.

[69] Witcover, *Resurrection*, p. 152.

[70] Ambrose, *Triumph of a Politician*, p. 59.

[71] "Republican Choice: Now It's Nixon Over Romney," *U.S. News and World Report* 62 (February 20, 1967): 14; "On the Rim," *Time* 89 (March 24, 1967): 16; "Forever Amber," *Newsweek* 69 (March 27, 1967): 31-32; "For Nixon, A Rosier Time in Latin America This Trip," *U.S. News and World Report* 62 (May 22, 1967): 20; Dick's Lucky Palm," *Time* 89 (June 2, 1967): 15.

[72] "Around the World, A Block Away." *Time* 89 (May 19, 1967): 29-30. One of the few sour notes was sounded by *New York Times* columnist James Reston. What was Nixon trying to prove on these trips, he asked rhetorically. He was attempting to prove "the new theories of American politics: a) that motion is progress; b) that the road to the White House runs through all the other capitals of the world; and c) that distance lends enchantment....he not only knows all the Republican county chairmen of the United States, but all the Prime Ministers of the world as well." Yet, in Reston's mind, there was "absolutely no evidence that travel has given him any new or deeper visions of America's problems in the world....Few candidates have ever seen so many new things or had so little new to say about them." *The New York Times*, May 25, 1967.

[73] "Romney and Nixon: Each Makes Gains in Polls," *U.S. News and World Report* 63 (August 28, 1967): 12-13; "Nixon vs. Rockefeller: Choice Shaping Up," *U.S. News and World Report* 64 (January 1, 1968): 38-40; "Other Fellows," *Newsweek* 71 (January 22, 1968): 21; "In Search of Enthusiasm," *Time* 91 (May 17, 1968): 23.

[74] Ambrose, *Triumph of a Politician*, p. 121.

[75] Witcover, *Resurrection*, pp. 211-213.

[76] Steve Hess and David Broder, *The Republican Establishment* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 194.

[77] "Forever Amber," p. 31.

[78] "And Then There Was Nixon: A Sudden Pullout Raises the Question: Can Rocky Stop Dick?" *Newsweek* 71 (March 11, 1968): 30-31.

[79] John Osborne, *The Nixon Watch* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1970), p. 4.

[80] Hess and Broder, *Republican Establishment*, p. 192.

[81] "President Nixon," p. 36.

[82] Quoted in "See Dick Run," p. 17.

[83] "And Then There Was Nixon," pp. 30-31.

[84] "Political Miracles," p. 22.

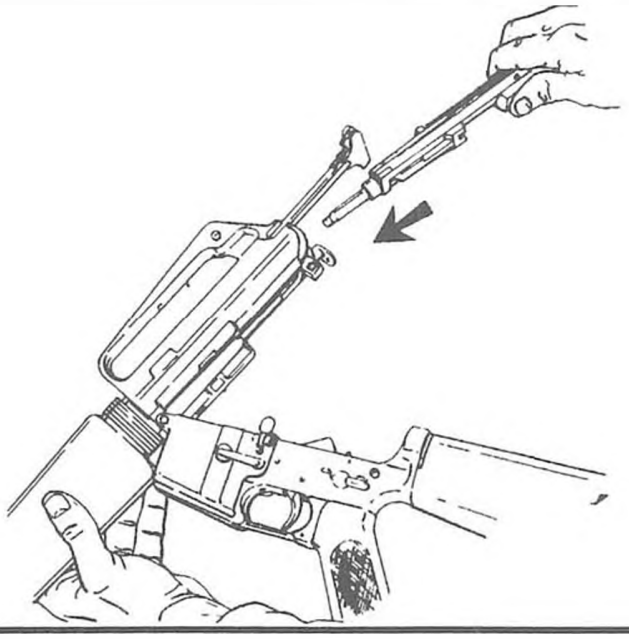
[85] "He's More Fun," p. 69.

[86] Quoted in Jonathan Schell, *The Time of Illusion* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), p. 20.

[87] "The Real Dick Nixon Stands Up," *Time* 72 (November 4, 1968): 28.

[88] Quoted in Sloyan, "Place is Forever Duller," p. 12.

[89] Feeney, "Whitewashed Stonewalling"; Halberstam, "Richard Nixon's Last Campaign," pp. 35-39; Shear, "Nixon Rises Again," pp. 44-45.



VIETNAM: INVOLVEMENT AND VIETNAMIZATION
AN ODYSSEY OF DECEIT

Marc B. Adin

> If falsehood had, like truth, but one face only, we should be upon better terms; for we should then take for certain the contrary to what the liar says: but the reverse of truth has a hundred thousand forms, and a field indefinite, without bound or limit... truth is certain and finite, and falsehood, infinite and uncertain.
> —Michael de Montaigne[1]

Are there ever sufficient reasons for a public official to lie for the public good? And if so, what are they? Further, what are the consequences of such lies in a democracy and why must the consequences of deceit be considered by those who might lie for the public good?

Using Sissella Bok's analysis of deceit as propounded in her book, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, I will examine the early American involvement in Vietnam, specifically the Kennedy-Johnson years from 1961 to 1964. It was during this period that American troop strength in Vietnam went from 6885 on January 1, 1961[2] to about 185,000[3] in December, 1964. American troops had gone from military advisors to the South Vietnamese Army to combatants in a major Asian land war. What public pronouncements from the administration led the American people to believe this military involvement was necessary? The "domino theory" provided the major umbrella of rationale for the growing and seemingly open-ended American commitment to the war. First articulated by President Eisenhower in 1954, the theory was used time and time again to explain the crucial essence of our involvement in Vietnam.[4] I do not intend to argue the validity of this theory, but rather to examine the deceptive practices whose purpose was either to bolster public support for the war or neutralize public criticism in the face of growing American commitment.

I will also examine the second period of orchestrated deceit by the U.S. in Vietnam—that period and the policy known as Vietnamization (a term first coined by Nixon's Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird to replace the awkward policy named de-Americanization) was first enunciated by Nixon on June 8, 1969.[5] In short, the program was designed to turn the war over to the South Vietnamese; to train them, equip them and finally leave them to carry the burden of the fight while U.S. troops returned home.

During the time of Vietnamization, I was an infantryman in Vietnam with the Fourth Infantry Division. Located in the Central Highlands, I played a role in numerous large battles with the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) as well as many smaller engagements. I was in Vietnam from March 1969 to April 1970. I saw, and I know that Vietnamization never came to pass; that Nixon's policy was a deceitful one; that American soldiers continued to die—ten thousand would be killed during the first year of Vietnamization.[6]

I will specifically examine one battle in which I participated: the siege of Ben Het. The siege began in May of 1969 and was broken in July of 1969.[7] The press widely reported that the breaking of the siege was an Army Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) operation. I am here to tell you that the American troops broke the siege at a high cost in lives, that the continuing deception took place in order to publicly demonstrate the Vietnamization of the war and the "success" of Nixon's policy. During a conversation I had about Ben Het with Shelby Stanton, author of *The Rise and Fall of an American Army* and *The Green Berets at War*, Stanton said, "Hell, you were smack in the middle of some shit history and didn't even know it." When I asked him about the ARVNs and their supposed active role in breaking the siege, Stanton's quick and short reply was "they weren't doing shit."[8] He was right.

From the beginning to the end, deceit was the cornerstone of U.S. policy in Vietnam. But why?

What were the lies told to the American people by the administration and what was their nature and their justification? What were their consequences? What forms did the deceit take and how did this early deceit blossom, leading us into a tunnel which ultimately had no light, just darkness, slaughter, destruction and defeat at its end.

For the purpose of this paper, the definition of 'lie' shall be that which is stated with the *intent* to deceive. In a national poll conducted in 1976, 69% of the respondents agreed that "over the last 10 years, this country's leaders have consistently lied to the people."[9] Was there justification for deceit on so massive a scale that the majority of people believed that they had been "consistently lied to?" What are the costs of such deceit? Lies misinform, obscure objectives, alternatives, costs and benefits and undermine the trust between those who govern and the governed. Immanuel Kant believed that:

> Truth must be the guiding principle of social intercourse. Without truth conversation becomes valueless. We can only know what a man thinks if he tells us his thoughts, and when he undertakes to express them he must truthfully do so, or else there can be no society of men.[10]

Lies stifle or nullify the open democratic process. Yet, it seems that our early involvement in Vietnam is replete with lies: lies by both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations to the American people and the Vietnamese pervade the pages of the *Pentagon Papers*. And finally the lie of Vietnamization—in its ultimate form a gross distortion of a policy whose bloody incarnation was a public relations stunt designed to extricate us from Vietnam with 'honor.'

> Without the shedding of blood, there is not remission of sins.[11]

In my examination of the critical period from January of 1961 to December of 1964, I will demonstrate how the deceit of those years set the stage for the most divisive war

America has been involved in since the Civil War. I will seek out the justifications for these lies because, as Ms. Bok points out, "lying requires a reason, truth telling does not."[12]

As decision-making most often has incrementalism as a practical component, so does lying. One lie breeds another, in an attempt to protect the credibility of the liar, or in reaction to a change in the external environment, setting up a chain reaction of cumulative harm and growing deceptive activities. Each small deception, disassociated from a milieu of deceit, may seem excusable, but its consequences can be disastrous. Thus it was in Vietnam. The seeds planted during the Kennedy-Johnson years matured during the Nixon years. Secret invasions of other countries, concealed troop estimates, massive B-52 bombings of North Vietnam which were hidden from the American public, and on and on until, at the end, it was clear to the people that any lie was possible.

The evidence upon which my argument is based is published in the *Pentagon Papers*. I also utilize first-hand accounts of those involved in various aspects of the decision-making process from 1961 to 1964.

For the Vietnamization period, I will compare my first-hand eyewitness recollections of the siege of Ben Het to media, Army and U.S. government accounts. The thread of deceit, although its path is Byzantine at times, runs through the heart of both periods.

I will review the salient developments of both of these periods during the war, and show an ever-expanding picture of intentional deceit designed to mislead, misinform and obscure the reasons and objectives for our ever increasing involvement in, and subsequent retreat from Vietnam. Could those in power have presented a truthful picture of Vietnam during these critical years? Certainly. But, I am drawn to conclude after completing this research, the decision makers did not believe that the American people would support such undertakings, and therefore felt compelled to deceive. In the final analysis, the accumulation of lies so undermined the foundation of trust between the people and their government, that the American war effort collapsed as trust in our policies was shattered.

My purpose is to examine some of the lies of each period, their justification and their consequences in order to remind us all of the price those in government can make people pay when truth is discarded and deceit prevails.

At the heart of the issue of lying for the public good is the question we (and our public policy makers) must ask ourselves: are there alternative forms of action which will resolve the difficulty without the use of the lie? We must also determine the rationale used to the justify the lie, and uncover counter-arguments to this justification. Perhaps most crucial, we must consider what the duped public's reaction might be to the lies to which it had been subjected.[13]

Lies for the public good take many guises. They are often excused because they are concocted for "noble reasons": the ruler knows what is best for the ruled; some circumstances are too complex or too long-term for the people to respond to rationally; after the deceit is known and its benefits known, the people will react gratefully.[14] But all these rationales assume the perspective of the liar, and this perspective is one of arrogance and moral and intellectual superiority. The consent of the governed is set aside for deceit.

The public official thinks he or she deceives us for our own good, or in the interest of national security. The problem is that when we are lied to for these reasons, we have no way of judging whether or not a decision is for the public good. We have no way of determining alternatives to protecting the national security, or even of ascertaining what the national security is. As we discovered during the Watergate Hearings, national security may also mean personal political security as well.

It becomes evident that the reasons for lying appeal much more to the liar than to those who are duped. Liars find the moral claims that their lies will be beneficial, prevent harm, work for the long term or support justice much more persuasive than do those who are subjected to the lie. We learn quickly that deceit destroys the trust between policy makers and the public which they serve.

What does the early American experience in Vietnam demonstrate about the justification and consequences of deceit? First, let us examine the acceptable justifications for lying: the saving of lives, or of harm to person or property, and self-defense would be the narrow construct of acceptable justifications for lying. When we are threatened in such fashions, lying will add no greater harm to a situation characterized by the threat to survival. Ms. Bok's analysis asserts that lying and violence are the two forms of deliberate assault upon human beings.[15] Both can coerce people into acting against their will, or can be used for self-defense or survival, and both should be used only as a last resort because the dire consequences of both acts often transcend the violence of the act itself. In both cases, the consequences can lead to further escalated use whose end cannot be predicted nor controlled. Both are contradictory to the democratic model which depends upon debate within an environment of security and consensus without a dictatorship of the majority.

At the end of the Second World War, in an attempt to reestablish the Western Alliance, the United States decided to support France in her efforts to hold onto her former colonies in Indochina. By 1950, the rise of Mao-Tse Tung in China and the outbreak of the Korean War had, from the American point of view, turned the Cold War into a global ideological struggle requiring economic and military action in order to stop further communist conquest. In 1954, after supporting French efforts at a cost to America of 2.5 billion dollars,[16] the French lost the war against the Viet-Minh (who were led by Ho Chi Minh) and withdrew from Indochina. Vietnam was divided into North and South, with Ho Chi Minh leading the communist North and Ngo Dinh Diem leading the noncommunist South. The United States, still seeking to check and counter the spread of communism in the region, supported Diem. In 1955 the first American military advisors arrived in South Vietnam.[17] The num-

ber of advisors remained at 342 until 1960 when the force was increased to 685 men.[18]

During the period from 1955 to 1960, local communist insurgents, known as Viet Cong, conducted guerrilla actions against the Diem regime. In the late 1950s, widespread popular dissatisfaction with Diem and a concurrent growing guerrilla threat led President Kennedy, inaugurated on January 20, 1961, to approve the Counter Insurgency Plan for Vietnam on January 28, 1961. The Counter Insurgency Plan called for expanded economic assistance to the South's military forces as well as an increase in the number of American military advisors.[19] The door was opening to wider American involvement in Vietnam. Yet Kennedy, in a Special Message to Congress on the Defense Budget on March 28, 1961, *two* months after the Counter Insurgency Plan was approved and underway, sought funds for the Plan. The amount of money requested was 42 million dollars: the cost of the Plan increased the aid package to Vietnam to 220 million dollars.[20]

In November of 1961, General Maxwell Taylor, Kennedy's military advisor on Vietnam, urged Kennedy to use the floods in the Mekong Delta—a Viet Cong stronghold—as a reason to send a task force of 6,000 to 8,000 American combat troops to Vietnam disguised as non-combat engineers involved in humanitarian flood relief. This task force would stay once attacked and, therefore, according to General Taylor, "provide a military presence in Vietnam capable of assuring Diem of our readiness to join him in a military showdown."[21] Clearly, Taylor's plan was designed to deceive the American people and Congress. The Viet Cong would know that the engineers were in Vietnam for a purpose other than flood relief. There is no direct evidence that Kennedy acted on the plan,[22] although on December 11, 1961, the first American combat troops arrived in Vietnam.[23]

The overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem in November of 1963 presents an interesting portrait of the cancerous nature of deceit. As political leaders become accustomed to lying, they grow insensitive to the truth. Some must come to believe that any lie is possible just as long as they can convince themselves that the people will be better off in the long term. Any value judgment concerning the decision to tell the truth or to lie is dismissed; the objective of the decision is paramount. From here, it is a short step to the conclusion that even if people will not be better off from the advancement of any particular lie, they will benefit by the maneuvers designed to keep the right people in office or the wrong people out of office. In this scenario, public official do not consider the long term consequences of such deceit.

Henry Cabot Lodge's involvement in the coup by South Vietnamese generals to overthrow Diem is a pure example of this thought process in action. Lodge, the United States Ambassador to Vietnam, was intimately involved in the coup. With the assistance of the CIA, Lodge solicited the coup, organized it, coordinated it, and orchestrated it with Washington's approval.[24] As the Presidential Palace in Saigon was being surrounded by coup forces Diem called Lodge at the American embassy on November 1, 1963 at 4:30PM. The conversation was taped at the embassy:

> **Diem**: Some units have made a rebellion and I want to know what is the attitude of the U.S.?
>
> **Lodge**: I do not feel well enough informed to tell you. I have heard the shooting, but am not acquainted with all the facts. Also it is 4:30AM in Washington and the U.S. government cannot possibly have a view.
>
> **Diem**: But you must have some general ideas. After all, I am Chief of State. I have tried to do my duty. I want to do now what duty and good sense require.
>
> **Lodge**: You certainly have done your duty. As I told you this morning, I admire your courage and your great contributions to your country. No one can take away from you the credit for all you have done. Now I am worried about your physical safety. I have a report that those in charge of the current activity offer you and your brother safe conduct out of the country if you resign. Have you heard this?
>
> **Diem**: No.
>
> **Lodge**: If I can do anything for your physical safety, please call me.
>
> **Diem**: I am trying to re-establish order.[25]

At 6:30am on the following day, November 2, Diem and his brother surrendered to coup soldiers. They were placed in an armored personnel carrier and shot to death.[26]

President Kennedy never commented publicly on the coup or its aftermath.[27] He was assassinated twenty-one days later in Dallas. American involvement in the coup was never officially acknowledged. In fact, Arthur Schlesinger, one of Kennedy's closest advisors, assured the American people on June 17, 1966: "It is important to state clearly that the coup of November 1, 1963, was entirely planned and carried out by the Vietnamese. Neither the American Embassy nor the CIA were involved in its instigation or execution."[28] One can only guess that Schlesinger's loyalty to Kennedy's memory or his support of Johnson's policy in Vietnam led him to lie so blatantly. In either event, the memory or the policy was more important than the truth about who was instrumental in the overthrow of the Diem government.

In September of 1964, Assistant Secretary of Defense, John McNaughton, reflecting a growing administration consensus, wrote a memorandum outlining a plan to deceive the American public. He reviewed possible courses of military action to cope with the deteriorating military situation in Vietnam. He advocated a massive increase of American combat troops, bombing of North Vietnam, mining of Haiphong Harbor and so forth. But an American Presidential Election campaign was underway. Johnson's Republican opponent, Senator Barry Goldwater, was being portrayed as a war hawk favoring escalation in Vietnam and brandishing nuclear threats. The memorandum from McNaughton ended with a paragraph entitled "Special Considerations for the Next

Two Months," stating, "we must act with special care during the next 2 months before the election... signaling to the North Vietnamese that initiatives against them are being taken, to the South Vietnamese that we are behaving energetically despite the restraints of our political season, and to the U.S. public that we are behaving with good purpose and restraint."[29] Apparently, McNaughton wanted the North Vietnamese to know the truth while the American public was to be deceived.

The consequences of this deceit were great. During the campaign, Johnson repeated over and over:

> The first responsibility, the only real issue in this campaign, the only thing you ought to be concerned about at all is: who can best keep the peace?[30]

But perhaps his most haunting and ironic campaign iteration was:

> This we pledge to you, we are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves.[31]

The strategy succeeded; Johnson won the election.

On July 28, 1965, Johnson reversed his pre-election stance and prepared the nation to send its boys over ten thousand miles away to bleed and die in the jungles, highlands, villages and rice paddies of Vietnam.

> I have asked the commanding general, General Westmoreland, what more he needs to meet this mounting aggression. He has told me. And we will meet his needs. We cannot be defeated by force of arms. We will stand in Vietnam.[32]

The war escalated as McNaughton described: one year later, on November 1, 1965, 175,000 American troops were in Vietnam.[33]

Deceit suppressed genuine debate about the war. Administration officials masquerading as the party of peace must have believed that they knew what was best for the American people. President Johnson denied the electorate an opportunity to give or refuse consent to the planned escalation of the war. The American public, believing they voted for the candidate of peace, found the country, within months, massively engaged in one of the most disastrous wars in our history.

The issue of President Roosevelt's covert actions prior to the outbreak of World War II and their relationship to President Johnson's actions in Vietnam raises a difficult question in a parallel political situation. Wasn't the same type of deceit employed by Roosevelt? And yet Roosevelt's deceit of the American public during the 1940 Presidential campaign is rarely criticized even though he often made statements such as:

> I have said this before, but I shall say it again and again and again: Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars.[34]

Although it could be argued that the threat posed to our survival before our entry into World War II was much greater than the threat of the Viet Cong, or that Johnson was escalating a war we already were involved in without the consent or knowledge of the public, or that ultimately we were attacked during world War II and entered the war to ensure our own as well as others' survival, the inescapable fact is that Roosevelt deceived the public. The dilemma is that, in retrospect, the lies of Roosevelt are excusable; but at the same time, can we sanction deceit whenever public officials decide that an exceptional threat has arisen? Or would we prefer to run the risk of failing to rise to a crisis honestly explained to us? Was Roosevelt's deceit used as a last resort? When lies to the public become accepted as routine, the consequences of alienation and lack of trust follow and both can ultimately be as destructive to the democratic process as any external threat.

The press in Vietnam was often embroiled in a dispute with the American military or the Administration as to the true nature of the conflict. The reporting of events by the press was often contrary to the picture the administration was painting. The early years in Vietnam were years of optimism for American public officials. "Every quantitative measurement we have shows we're winning this war," stated Secretary of Defense McNamara on his first visit to Vietnam in 1962. General Taylor in 1962 detected "a great national movement" rising to destroy the Viet Cong. President Kennedy in his 1963 State of the Union message declared that "the spearpoint of aggression has been blunted in South Vietnam." In May of 1963 the Defense Department announced that "the corner has been turned toward victory in Vietnam." In October of 1963, General Harkins, senior American military advisor in Vietnam, announced that the "end of the war is in sight" and that it would be "won within a year."[35]

American and other western journalists, however, were reporting just the opposite—that the American and South Vietnamese military programs were a failure, that Diem had little popular support, that Diem was steadily losing control of Vietnam to the communists. In response, American officials attacked the press. To this day there is a readily accepted school of thought which blames the media for losing the war, for manipulating the news and turning the American people against the war and against their government.

In 1961, Admiral Felt, Commander of the Pacific Fleet, reproached the Associated Press correspondent in Vietnam with, "why don't you get on the team?"[36] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. states:

> One experience after another made the newspapermen more certain that the [American] Embassy was lying to them. They did not recognize the deeper pathos, which was that the officials believed their own reports. they were deceiving not only the American government and people, but themselves.[37]

John Mecklin, press advisor to the American Embassy during these years, saw events in a different light. The

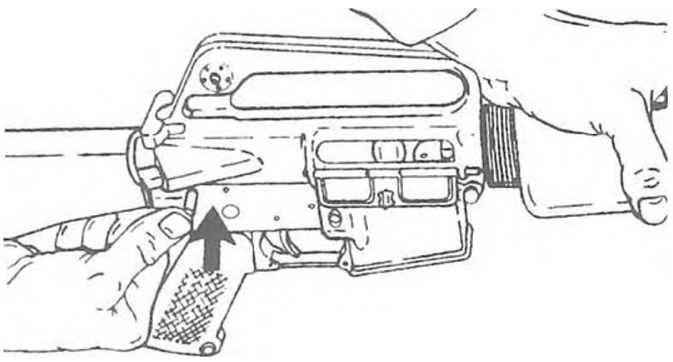
problem, as Mecklin saw it, was that the Embassy had to keep to the line given out in Washington: that the American advisors were *only* advisors, that the U.S. was not actively involved in the war, and that Diem, although a little weak in his interpretation of democracy, was coming along fine. (The Washington position could be easily mistaken for later newspaper reports of American involvement in Central America.) Although members of the American mission knew the truth about American involvement they had to lie to the correspondents. They did not tell "really big falsehoods but endless little ones," Mecklin said.[38]

Even President Kennedy attempted to influence the reporting from Vietnam. Kennedy did not favor the reports of the *New York Times* correspondent in Vietnam, David Halberstam, and put pressure on Arthur Sulzberger, the *Times* publisher, to get him out of Vietnam. Kennedy told Sulzberger that Halberstam was "too close to the story and too involved" and asked Sulzberger to reassign him. Sulzberger refused.[39] Perhaps McGeorge Bundy, Kennedy's National Security Advisor, said it best (or worst): "... a communiqué should say nothing, in such a way as to fool the press without deceiving them."[40]

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:

> Telling the truth, therefore, is not solely a matter of moral character; it is also a matter of correct appreciation of real situations and of serious reflection upon them. The more complex the actual situations of a man's life, the more responsible and more difficult will be his task of telling the truth.[41]

And so it was in Vietnam. The complexities of the situation did make the task of telling the truth difficult. But the consequences of abdicating responsibility for telling the truth still blemish American foreign policy—one only has to look at the later situation in Central America. Deception of the type discussed in this paper harms the very essence of democratic government; it prevents the electorate from casting an informed vote on crucial issues. It is the process of deceiving the people for the sake of the people and it is the most dangerous form of deceit of which a democratic government is capable.



Vietnamization

> You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
> Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
> Sneak home and pray you'll never know
> The hell where youth and laughter go.
>
> ***
>
> If I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath,
> I'd live with scarlet Majors at the Base,
> And speed glum heroes up the line to death.
> You'd see me with my puffy petulant face,
> Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel,
> Reading the Roll of Honour. 'Poor young chap,'
> I'd say—'I used to know his father well;
> Yes, we've lost heavily in this last scrap.'
> And when the war is done and youth stone dead,
> I'd toddle safely home and die—in bed.
>
> —Siegfried Sassoon[42]

One June 9, 1969, the day Nixon and South Vietnam's President Thieu met on Midway Island and unveiled the Vietnamization program, I was in Pleiku, South Vietnam (RVN). I arrived in-country on March 20, 1969, my twenty-second birthday, and was promptly assigned to a unit of the Fourth Infantry Division. The company I was assigned to was half-strength (about 50 men) because of recent heavy casualties.

My first month was disastrous. We were bombarded by 155mm rocket attacks during the night, four or five times a week. The 155s sounded like railroad trains as they roared overhead and plowed into our dug-in positions. The attacks resulted in several deaths and ten to fifteen wounded in the company. Replacements could not keep up with our losses. The 155s, with an accurate range of twenty miles, left craters eight feet deep and twenty or thirty feet across. Every morning after an attack we would survey the damage and numbly stare into the holes filled with pink, muddy water wondering if our blood would be mixed in next. I cried myself to sleep every night that first month. How did I get into this? How could I get out?

Towards the end of May we were hit by a rocket attack. I was walking out in the open, but I managed to get into a drainage ditch which ran along a small dirt road. I tried to push myself, to burrow myself under the soft, gasoline-scented earth. The air screamed above me; the earth threw me up over the side of the ditch, and then there was no sound. I crawled back into the ditch, wondering what had happened. The attack started about an hour after sundown; screams, huge explosions and bloody, bare feet glimpsed as jeep ambulances passed me... and then it was done. How could dawn have come so quickly when it was just dusk? Time had been compressed and twisted by the specter of death about to engulf me. I stood up and climbed out of the ditch. Ten feet away was a 155 rocket: two-thirds of its six foot length was covered by the soft red clay. It was a dud. I bent down slowly, got on my hands and knees, and crawled away backwards, not wanting to rouse the monster by making it aware of my presence.

During the day my job was to man an M-60 machine-gun mounted in the back of an armor-plated jeep. Convoys composed of one hundred vehicles supplied the many small outposts in the Central Highlands with everything from ammunition to toilet paper. The convoys were often ambushed because of their strategic importance. They were also great targets.

One hundred trucks, many hauling aviation gas or heavy explosives, were tempting targets for the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) gunners. Often we had to traverse narrow roads, so that if the first few trucks were hit and the last few were hit, we were immobilized and had to withstand the assualt until air support and more infantry arrived. In May I was caught in about eight ambushes. We were ambushed by NVA regulars, who were heavily equipped and tough. The May ambushes never lasted more than about four hours. We managed to fend off annihilation until support came in the form of flanking infantry or air strikes by Cobra helicopter gunships. We would lose ten to twenty vehicles and many dead and wounded during each ambush. In the third ambush I was badly burned on my right hand when my machine gun jammed. I removed the barrel bare-handed instead of putting on the asbestos "hot glove" specifically designed to remove cherry-red, glowing gun barrels. I threw the hot barrel down, replaced it, and continued firing. I smelled burning flesh and looked down at the barrel I had just pulled off. Half of the skin of my palm was stuck to it, frying like a piece of bacon.

At the beginning of June we were ambushed two miles from a large ARVN infantry base camp. We called for their assistance time and time again. Finally, after two hours, they got within one mile of us, fired off all their ammunition, and said they had to withdraw to resupply. They never came back or answered our calls after that. We were eventually relieved by other units from the Fourth Infantry Division, who came from seventeen miles away. It was about a week after this ambush that Nixon met with Thieu on Midway. After his meeting, Nixon said:

> President Thieu informed me that the progress of the training program and the equipping program for South Vietnamese forces had been so successful that he could now recommend that the United States begin to replace U.S. combat forces with Vietnamese forces. This same assessment was made by general Abrams when he reported to me last night and this morning.[43]

Vietnamization would come in three stages. In the first stage, U.S. forces would turn over combat responsibility to the ARVN while continuing air and logistical support. In the second stage, the U.S. would assist the ARVN in developing their own support capabilities. In the final stage, the U.S. would restrict itself solely to an advisory role.[44] Throughout, American forces would be steadily reduced. It would be just like running the Vietnam war movie backwards, except we would leave an American clone army in our wake.

It is interesting to note that as early as March 11, 1969, Secretary Laird was extolling the improvement of the ARVN's fighting mettle and was suggesting the ARVNs would be able "to replace some of the 540,000 American" soldiers then in RVN. "The Secretary declined to say how many Americans could be replaced or when... but he said [they] would be able to shoulder a larger share of the fighting in the future."[45]

Ben Het

> My experience in the war has haunted me all my life and for many days, I have, it seemed, lived in that world rather than this.
> —Edmund Blunden

> Yea, how they set themselves in battle-array
> I shall remember to my dying day.
> —John Bunyan

Ben Het. A mountain top among hundreds of mountain tops in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. On top of this mountain was a small dug-in Special Forces camp composed of about fifty Americans and five hundred Montagnards. The Camp was located about seven miles east of the three-border junction of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. On some maps I have seen Ben Het appear to be right on the border, or just inside Cambodia. The purpose of the camp was to monitor several major NVA infiltration routes.[46]

The area had an otherworldly feel about it. I had been there once with a convoy in April. Mountain tops were frequently covered by quick moving, violent rainstorms; it was cold, day and night—about 45 degrees. The landscape, where it was not blasted into a yellow-red moonscape, was dense, triple-canopy jungle, bamboo and brush. The road into Ben Het, narrow and rough, made a big left-hand turn, uphill, just before the camp came into sight. The jungle reached out to us as we made the left uphill turn. Great place for an ambush, I thought in April, crawling uphill around a turn. "The NVA must have built this road," I joked with jeep driver. It was an uneventful convoy into Ben Het that April. The situation soon changed. My next trip would see the convoy become bloody shambles.

Ben Het had come under siege in mid-May. We were aware of the siege from the reports, the distant thunder and tremors we felt from the massive B-52 strikes over thirty miles from us at Pleiku. The reports said an NVA regiment had laid siege to Ben Het. A convoy was being assembled to break through. Volunteers only need apply. I volunteered, as did the entire company. To this day I am not sure what force pushed me to volunteer. It was as if we were destined to confront the siege. That was why we were in Vietnam—not to be rocketed, not to be in firefights, not to be ambushed, but to break the siege of Ben Het.

Our route would take us from Pleiku to Kontum to Dak To to Ben Het—a little over 30 miles. We got up at 5:00AM to get everything in order. It was a cool dawn with some big puffy cumulus clouds suspended in brilliant blue. The convoy was heavily armed—about fifty vehicles, thirty carrying heavy weaponry of one kind or another. I was still behind an M-60 machine-gun in an armored jeep named "Blind Faith." We were to pick up air cover at Dak To for the run into Ben Het. Six Cobra

helicopters armed with rocket launchers and machine-guns capable of firing 6,000 rounds per minute would be in the air above us. The night before, a B-52 strike had dropped 1,800 tons of high explosives on the NVA surrounding the camp. We thought we had a good chance to make it through.

The trip up to Kontum was uneventful. In fact, it was pleasant: 60 degrees, blue sky. I almost forgot where I was, what I was doing. As we passed through Kontum, a bullet was fired at the jeep—just one shot, whizzing by, harmless. By the time I swung the machine-gun around to return fire, we were two hundred yards away. I didn't even know which direction the shot came from. I returned to my daydreaming.

At Dak To the Cobras began their covering flight. Six of them swooped down, in turn, over the convoy, about two hundred feet above us. We picked up our speed to 50mph, which was the best we could do because of the rough condition of the road. Much of the road had been blasted, and if I hadn't held on to the machine-gun tightly, I could easily have been thrown out. About a mile from the big left turn I looked up at the lead Cobra. Suddenly, two huge explosions lifted the two lead vehicles up as if they were pieces of bursting popcorn. One landed upside down and burst into flame. I never saw the other one again. My first thought was, "Why the hell did the Cobra rocket our vehicles?" Before I could give myself an answer, the side of our jeep was hit by a rip of small arms fire. Bullets careened around me from all directions. I ducked behind the armor-plated sides of the jeep. The windshield blew in from the force of a large explosion in front of us. The driver and the 2nd Lieutenant in the front seats had their faces and necks cut by the flying glass. The roar was beyond imagination—in front, in back, on top, everywhere. The constant whiz of small arms fire filled the air with the sound of supersonic bees just waiting to find soft flesh to tear through. I popped up and fired burst after burst into the canopy around us. I could see what appeared to be thousands of muzzle flashes in the jungle on both the left and right sides. The Cobras were working now, rocketing and spraying the jungle on either side of the convoy with thousands of rounds per minute. I had no idea how much time passed. The jungle disappeared before my eyes, cut down by the shower of steel both sides were throwing at each other. I heard screams and cries and curses mixed in with all this; some were my own. And then it stopped. First them, and minutes later we stopped too. The Cobras kept at it, but for us it was done. The radio was filled with pleas for help. Only the Americans at Dak To answered—they were on their way.

The convoy was finished. Burning, steaming overturned wreckage was everywhere. Heavy billowing black smoke with a core of deep red-orange flames leapt toward the sky. Not one of the vehicles could move. We had lost about thirty dead and at least sixty wounded, some of whom would die later from their injuries. The wounded were helicoptered out from Dak To; the dead rode with us in trucks back to Pleiku. I was in a daze. All I remember is staring out of the back of the truck, smoking cigarettes, one after another, all the way back. When the truck finally stopped, the ground kept moving. The ground didn't stop moving for days. I felt I would fall any minute, as if the earth were spinning, tumbling, out of control in its axis. We unloaded the body bags. It was dark, but I had no idea of what time it was.

The *New York Times* reported the incident. Information about the ambush came from the Army Command:

> Attempts to push an armored column from Dak To, in Kontum Province, to open a land route to the camp have failed, according to military spokesmen. (June 24, 1969)

Strangely enough, it was not clear who the "armored units" were. American or South Vietnamese? It was a front page story: "Enemy Surrounds Besieged U.S. Base." Even more bizarre was the front page story of June 25, 1969: "A Convoy Reaches U.S. Base at Ben Het."

> A column of tanks and armored cars today led a convoy carrying badly needed supplies into the besieged allied camp at Ben Het, harassed by North Vietnamese rocket and machine-gun fire.
>
> *United States sources in the field* said that one of the tanks had been knocked out by a rocket and *five South Vietnamese crewmen* had been wounded. [Emphasis mine.]

A major American setback resulting in large numbers of dead and wounded had become an ARVN victory with minimal casualties. Vietnamization had to work, if not for the American soldier in the field, then for the American at home.

On June 27, a *New York Times* front page article about Ben Het stated:

> Spokesmen in Saigon reported that the road [into Ben Het] had been secured, but a reporter in the area said that with the pull back of the South Vietnamese battalions, the road was virtually closed. He said that no convoys were bringing in supplies today... *the defense of the outpost is under the jurisdiction of the South Vietnamese.* [Emphasis mine.]

The article went on to summarize American casualties for the week and the war: 274 killed, 1,686 wounded, total killed 36,625. Over 22,000 more American boys were to be killed before Vietnamization would be complete.

More remarkable was the news that the "defense of the outpost" was the responsibility of the South Vietnamese. This was the first reference to any such jurisdiction, to my knowledge. The men in the camp were American soldiers and Montagnard tribesmen, the air support was all American, and the convoy which failed to break the siege was American.

On July 1 we went up the road again. This time we got through without a shot being fired. The NVA had left.

> A convoy of *South Vietnamese* armored personnel carriers rumbled into Ben Het late today [July 1] over a road from Dak To that had been closed for a week, military spokesmen reported here... the troops en-

> countered no significant resistance from enemy forces.[47] [Emphasis mine.]

Sometimes I feel like a character in *The Twilight Zone.*

On July 9, 1966, one week later, the headline story in the *New York Times* was, "Nation Greets First Troops Withdrawn by Nixon." Of course. A two month siege involving Americans and resulting in large numbers of American dead and wounded was news which had to be manipulated and managed. Americans became Vietnamese. This then was Vietnamization—the words created the reality, a sleight of hand in order to continue the deception. Perhaps if we saw the words in print enough times or said it enough times it would become a reality. But we had been deceived again; one final Big Lie. And as for the South Vietnamese... well, they knew what was going on all along. They were doomed to the nightmarish collapse of 1975. Perhaps that explains the "suddenness" of the fall of South Vietnam.

How did this deception happen? There are still many who believe that the press played a role in causing us to lose the war. Was the press also taken in by the deception? I believe the answer is, yes.

Drew Middleton, the military correspondent for the *New York Times*, blamed the very fact that there *were* no censors:

> On three trips to Vietnam I found generals and everyone else far more wary of talking to reporters precisely because there was no censorship. Their usual line with a difficult or sensitive question was, "You must ask the public relations people about that." The latter, usually of low rank, clammed up, and the reporter and public got less... Comparing the Second World War and Vietnam, I think there was a hell of a lot more original reporting in the first and not so much sitting around in bars—although there was plenty of drinking—and conning each other on stories.[48]

David Halberstam writes:

> the problem was trying to cover something every day as news when in fact the real key was that it was all derivative of the French Indo-China War, which is history. So you really should have had a third paragraph in each story which would have said, "All of this is shit and none of it means anything because we are in the same footsteps as the French and we are prisoners of their experience." But given the rules of newspaper reporting you can't really do that. Events have to be judged by themselves, as if the past did not really exist. This is not usually such a problem for a reporter, but to an incredible degree in Vietnam we were haunted and imprisoned by the past.[49]

The military and government successfully hid the bombing campaign over Cambodia, which took place over a fourteen month period in 1969-1970, from the American people. It wasn't until 1972 that its full extent was known.[50] Given these lies, we should be little surprised to find out that we were lied to about the siege of Ben Het and the 'newspeak' of Vietnamization.

Television and the "living-room war" could not, unfortunately, give as a window to see through the massive deceptions of the war. What it did do, however, was to bring the brutality of war home and strip away the mask of glory war wears over its horrific face. Our fathers, sons, brothers, and friends were killing or being killed before our eyes, in our homes. The real act of war was more horrible than the movies ever prepared us for.

Reagan, by banning coverage of the Grenada invasion, and Bush, by tightly controlling coverage of the Gulf War, apparently learned that lesson of Vietnam well. An improved skill at the fine art of deceit may well be one of the collateral lessons of Vietnam. Certainly we must take great care in judging the actions of any government and in analyzing all the information available to us.

Perhaps I.F. Stone summed it up for the most cynical of us:

> Every government is run by liars and nothing they say should be believed.

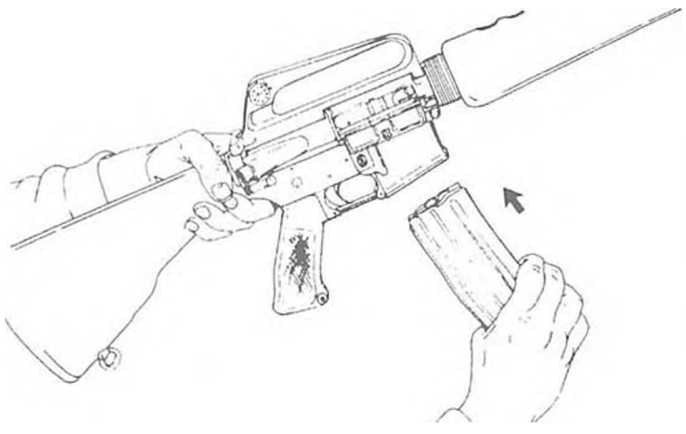
My cynicism does not run as deeply as Stone's. There is a greater struggle in which we all participate as warriors transformed by both our experiences and the ways in which we live our lives:

> We are all one, we are all an imperiled essence. If at the far end of the world a spirit degenerates, it drags down our spirit into its own degradation... This is why the salvation of the Universe is also our salvation, why solidarity among men is not longer a tender-hearted luxury but a deep necessity and self preservation, as much a necessity as, in an army under fire, the salvation of your comrade-in-arms.
> —Nikos Kazantzakis[51]

Notes

1 *Essays* (Chicago, 1952): 16.
2 Michael Gravel, ed., *The Pentagon Papers* (Boston, 1975), Vol II: 416.
3 Gravel, Vol. III: 478.
4 Theodore Draper, *Abuse of Power* (New York, 1967): 116.
5 Tad Szulc, *The Illusion of Peace: Foreign Policy in the Nixon Years* (New York, 1978): 66.
6 Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: 1983): 601.
7 Shelby Stanton: *The Rise and Fall of an American Army* (Novato, 1985): 288.
8 Shelby Stanton, telephone conversation, July 10, 1986.
9 Sissela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (New York, 1978): 184.
10 W.T. Jones, *et al, Approaches to Ethics* (New York, 1962): 263.
11 Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore* (New York, 1966): 1.
12 Bok: 24.
13 *Ibid.*: 112.
14 *Ibid.*: 176.
15 *Ibid.*: 19.
16 Philip Knightley, *The First Casualty* (New York, 1975): 374.
17 *Ibid.*: 374.

[18] Gravel, Volume III: 416.
[19] Gravel, Volume II: 6.
[20] *Ibid.*: 800.
[21] *Ibid.*: 418.
[22] Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions* (New York, 1979): 134.
[23] Gravel, Volume II: 126.
[24] *Ibid.*: 201-207.
[25] *Ibid.*: 268.
[26] *Ibid.*: 270.
[27] *Ibid.*: 830.
[28] Draper: 56.
[29] Gravel, Volume III: 556-559.
[30] Bok: 181.
[31] Karnow: 395.
[32] *Ibid.*: 476.
[33] Gravel, Volume III: 478.
[34] Bok: 189.
[35] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy* (Boston, 1967): 25.
[36] *Ibid.*: 26.
[37] *Ibid.*: 27.
[38] Knightly: 375.
[39] Ernest Gruening and H.W. Beaser, Vietnam Foley *(Washington, 1969): 87.*
[40] Knightly: 380.
[41] *Ethics* (New York, 1965): 364.
[42] L.M. Parsons, ed., *Men Who March Away* (New York, 1965): 86.
[43] Szulc: 66.
[44] George Esper, *The Eyewitness History of the Vietnam War* (New York, 1983): 116.
[45] *New York Times*, March 11, 1969.
[46] Shelby Stanton, *Green Berets at War*: 257.
[47] *New York Times*, July 2, 1969.
[48] Knightly: 423.
[49] *Ibid.*: 423.
[50] *Ibid.*: 421.
[51] Quoted in Arthur Egendorf, *Healing From the War* (Boston, 1985): 206.



"Red-Diaper Babies"[1] in the New Left, 1961-1971: Three Autobiographical Contributions

Michael Meeropol, Western New England College, and Staff Economist, Center for Popular Economics (Amherst, Ma.)

The following three papers were presented in abbreviated form at the Sixties Generation Conference at Western Connecticut State University on Nov. 5, 1994. Following the presentations, there was a half-hour discussion period. We present these autobiographical testimonies in hope that they might serve as "informant statements" that students of the period might wish to use as pieces of the puzzle they are putting together. We made no pretense of providing a complete historical context, though because of our personal and academic predilections the reader will note that we couldn't resist doing some of that.

In 1973, I began a process of delving deeply into my personal past as a result of "coming out" in public as the son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. In interviews and in writing an autobiographical treatment of my childhood in *We Are Your Sons*[2] I began to think for the first time of what it meant to grow up as a "red diaper baby," a child of Old Left parents in the McCarthy period. My first interveiwer was an old friend Jonah Raskin who was just completing his autobiographical treatment which ultimately was called *Out of the Whale*[3]. Within a year, I had written my section of *We Are Your Sons* and embarked on five intensive years during which time my brother and I devoted a lot of energy and time to reopening our parents' case. At the very end of an historical appendix to the First Edition of *We Are Your Sons* I speculated about the role of children of the Old Left in the New Left.

> James P. O'Brien in his Ph.D. dissertation about the New Left has discovered a large proportion of "second generation radicals" on the campuses in the early sixties.
>
> "Generally these students ... did not bring to college with them a well-formulated Marxist ideology. What they brought was a set of attitudes favorable to peace, civil liberties, and racial tolerance, as well as a willingness to act in support of these goals. In most cases, partially reflecting the trauma that radicals and their families went through in the 1950s, they also brought a sense of estrangement from American society, which made them feel most at home in the dissenting subculture on the campuses."
>
> O'Brien estimated that between one quarter and one third of politically active students were second generation radicals, but has since revised his estimates upwards in a letter to me [1974]. Asked about the idea that the space remaining for the Old Left by the Eisenhower somnolescence [my terminology for the failure to impose out and out fascism and physically annihilate the left] might have contributed to the rise of the New Left, he responded:

> "I guess generally the Old Left preserved and transmitted a notion of politcs as something that ordinary people can do something about, and also the idea (in distinction to Kennedy-style liberalism) that there are right and wrong sides of domestic social issues, not just problems to be solved by experts. It also helped to create a social milieu which fostered political dissent and which gave many young people the sense of being part of a vaguely defined social-political community."[1]

I never pursued these speculations any further. The initial discussions and thoughts about what it meant to be a "red-diaper baby" faded as the immediacy of that present took over.

In 1992, I heard about the first Montgomery to My Lai conference sponsored by Vietnam Generation, Inc. I immediately thought of the possibility of bringing together a number of "red-diaper babies" to explore the question that I had left hanging in 1975. Time constraints delayed my participation in the conference until it came around again, in 1994.

In anticipating this panel, I asked my co-presenters to attempt to relate how their upbringing as children with Old Left beliefs, framed their reactions to our experiences as we saw the rise of the New Left — the rise of the Feminist Movement, and the rise of the Gay Rights movement.

I also asked them to consider certain sub-questions. What were our reactions to the issue of violence in the movement? How did we react to the revolution in popular culture—bohemianism, popular music, sex and drugs? What were our thoughts about joining organizations and following leadership? How did we see ourselves making a difference in the world?

The papers are presented in the order in which they were given, followed by a transcript of the discussion augmented my our elaborations on answers either briefly given or not given at all at the time.

Notes

[1] The *Encyclopedia of the American Left* has an entry for "Red Diaper Baby" which identifies the origin of the term as follows: "In the 1920s, children of southern California Communist Party members used the phrase to refer derisively to their peers who acted as if birthright alone, not activisim or theoretical knowledge, provided revolutionary credentials." However, we use the term more neutrally to mean children of parents affiliated with the organized Marxist movement, especially the Communist Party of the U.S.

[2] Robert and Michael Meeropol *We Are Your Sons, the Legacy of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975): 3-255. The same pagination occurs in the second edition (Urbana, Ill: U. of Illinois Press, 1987) which is the only one currently available. Our earliest autobiographical interviews were in *Ramparts* (Sept. 1973) and *University Review* (October, 1973).

[3] Full title, *Out of the Whale, Growing Up in the American Left* (NY: Links Books, 1974). Jonah's original title when it was excerpted in *University Review* was "The Autobiography of a Red-Diaper Baby."

[4] *We Are Your Sons*, First Edn: 395-6. First quote from James P. O'Brien, "The Development of a New Left in the United States, 1960-1965" (Ph D dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1971): 23. Second quote is letter James P. O'Brien to Michael Meeropol, October, 1974.

Red Diaper Baby: From A Jewish Chicken Farm in the Catskills, to the Cane Fields of Cuba, to the First Gay Protests in New York City

Paper presented at the conference on the Sixties sponsored by Vietnam Generation, Inc. Western Connecticut state university, Danbury, CT, Nov. 5, 1994

Allen Young, Liberation News Service, 1967-1970, Gay Liberation Front, 1970-1971.

I have a strong sense of what was good about growing up in a Communist Party (CP) household, and of what was not good. Most of this analysis was something I did not perceive as a youth. I was capable of developing this analysis only as I matured—first in the early 1960s after I had left home to go away to college and became aware of something called the New Left (C. Wright Mills was one of my teachers at Columbia).[1] And then, more in the late sixties when the New Left took on a more activist form and I dived in with fervor and apparently limitless conviction.

I was born in 1941 in Liberty, New York, in the Catskills, an area known as the Borscht Belt or the Jewish Alps. My mother was born in Rumania, now Moldova, and my father was born in Manhattan. My mother's parents were orthodox Jews and kept a kosher home, while my paternal grandparents tended a little toward atheism but were very traditional nonetheless. Among my earliest memories (mid-1940s) are the picture of both grandfathers reading: my mother's father reading Hebrew liturgy and my father's father reading a Yiddish language daily newspaper, *The Day*, not the leftist Yiddish language daily, *The Forward*.

Living in New York City in the 1930s, my parents became involved in the labor movement and the Communist Party. My father worked as a printer, my mother in the retail clothing trade. The Communist Party had tens of thousands of members in the 1930s, but by the 1950s the numbers had dwindled. People left at the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact.[2] They left over the issue of Finland.[3] They left after World War II when Communist governments consolidated power, with the help of the Red Army, throughout eastern Europe. They left when Khrushchev gave significant revelations of Stalin's crimes, of the murders of millions.[4] They left when Hungary was invaded by Red Army troops.[5] On the other hand, it may

well be that the greatest number left because they were deeply frightened by the McCarthyist onslaught against the U.S. left. Some were ridiculed as "parlor pinks," that is, they were viewed as leftists who lacked the courage of their convictions, people willing to express their unpopular views only in the privacy of their living room. My parents did not leave, however, continuing their membership toward the end of the 1950s. They did not withdraw from the party when most people did. In fact, they only left as the result of bogus charges of racism. (Expulsion of people from the CP on various charges was not unusual though it was a practice I was not aware of.)

My folks had moved to the Catskills in the late 1930s and started a chicken farm. (There were two unique communities of Jewish chicken farmers (many of them leftists)—in the Catskills and in southern New Jersey. My father was an active member of a farmers' cooperative and both of my parents were active in the American Labor Party, considered a front group for the Communist Party (though the term "front group" was essentially a hostile epithet that was rejected by my parents).[6] Farming was a struggle, but my father, especially, was proud of his ability to produce quality eggs, though eventually the farm went bankrupt. I grew up with a great sense of pride in the political struggle waged by my parents and their friends, though I did not identify this as the CP—that was dangerous and secret, even though CP publications were all over our house as was the independent but "fellow traveller" newsweekly the *National Guardian*.[7] My parents called themselves and their friends "progressives," a kind of closet terminology that I resent to this day because I associate it with dishonesty. My pride was based on their defense of working people, their opposition to racism and fascism, their reverence for peace. Part of the pride resulted from the sense of being different, being special. For some red diaper babies, I think this "difference" was an unpleasant, sometimes horrible and alienating experience, but for me, it was more thrilling than scary. There were a few instances where I was hassled (someone once asked me Stalin's wife's first name, which of course I did not know), but this was of minor concern to me.

As I see it now, I was essentially indoctrinated into left-wing dogma. I was not encouraged to think for myself, and I was not particularly well educated in the more controversial and complex aspects of left-wing politics. I didn't know what a Trotskyist was, except that it was bad. In some areas, what I learned was useful at times though harmful in its absolute tone —for example, I was taught to mistrust the U.S. press and government authority. Communists gave a great deal of importance to Negro History Week (now Black History Month), and I learned about Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass (not part of any public school curriculum in those days)—but I didn't learn that Richard Wright, the great Negro novelist, had bitterly broken with the Communist Party. It wasn't until many years later that I read the accounts by Wright and others in *The God That Failed*, which today I would call an aptly entitled book. I learned a lot of labor history and knew about Joe Hill[8] and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, but it took me years to accept the idea that labor unions might be corrupt or labor leaders self-serving. In social studies class, I was a tiger when it came to defending the faith, though now some of this seems foolish. When my teacher used the term "satellite" to describe Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, I protested vociferously. I remember once referring in class to the leader of Spain as "Butcher Franco," thinking that "Butcher" was his first name, when in fact it was an epithet I had read in a left-wing leaflet. I give these examples to show how little I really knew.

One thing I knew from first hand experience was how frightening McCarthyism and the Cold War Red Scare was to me and to my parents. My mother, being foreign born, had to get a lawyer to help her obtain documentation requested by the government, so that she could avoid deportation. My parents burned many of the pamphlets they owned; much of this was CP literature praising the Soviet Union. I remember being frightened and upset at this book-burning; it was the most immediate example I have of the danger they felt. They mourned the death of the Rosenbergs and they raised money to free Morton Sobell,[9] who was sent to Federal prison for crimes he allegedly committed. I became friends with Michael Meeropol in 1958 when I was a freshman at Columbia. This was only five years after his parents' execution.

It was great to have the friendship of other red diaper babies. We were a special community, and we banded together against a hostile outside world. We rarely, if ever, expressed doubts about our parents' political views. We were kids, for sure, but we were pretty different from other kids. I remember once hiding behind a hedge along Riverside Drive in New York City with my friend M—— L——. Maybe we were 10 or 11. We had water pistols and were squirting people who walked by. When a black woman walked by, we didn't squirt, instinctively protecting her. Later, we had a long discussion about which was the right thing to do: show our belief in equality by squirting the black woman the same way we squirted white people, or refrain from squirting because we understood the unfairness of racism.

When I left home and arrived at Columbia (fall of 1958), things started to change for me. The New Left began (for me) in the late 1950s with British pacifists who objected to the Soviet nuclear program as much as to the Western nuclear program. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, there were various new publications expressing the ideas of the New Left, magazines like *Studies on the Left* (Madison, Wisconsin[10]), *New University Thought* in Chicago and *Root and Branch* in Berkeley[11]. The policies of the Soviet Union were beginning to be questioned, especially the militarism and the lack of democracy, also the specific brutality and the anti-Semitism of the Stalinist regime. Stalin had been a heroic figure for my parents in the 1940s and even up to his death in the early 1950s, but now things were starting to change. And I was ripe and ready. I met other kinds of socialists, those who supported Norman Thomas (the so-called right wing socialists), the Trotskyists, and others. I went to meetings and heard speeches by a variety of people: Norman Thomas, Bayard Rustin,[12] Mike Harrington,[13] Eleanor Roosevelt, Benjamin Davis (a leader of the CPUSA).[14]

None of the other groups in the Old Left appealed to me, however, even though they were actively recruiting (unlike the CP, which was laying low). The anti-communism of these groups bothered me, and some of the people seemed a little nutty. (I'm convinced that people who are very needy psychologically, some even mentally disturbed, gravitate toward certain political and religious groups—leftist sects are not unlike religious cults.)

In 1959, Fidel Castro and the guerrillas he led came to power in Cuba, and this was a watershed event for me. Here was a real independent revolutionary, someone challenging capitalism and the United States but not subservient to the Soviet Union and clearly not dogmatic. The Cuban revolution also had an element of irreverence and fun to it. My professor, C. Wright Mills, visited Cuba and returned to write a strongly pro-Castro book, *Listen Yankee*. Mills, though his lectures and his other major books, *White Collar*, *The Power Elite*, *The Causes of World War III*, had a profound influence on me. Like Fidel sporting a beard, Mills rode a motorcycle and refused to wear a jacket and tie, the only professor I knew who rebelled in this way. I met some dynamic individuals on the Columbia campus who became outspoken defenders of the Cuban Revolution, among them the economist James O'Connor (then an instructor at Barnard)[15] and Electa Rodriguez, a Mexican-born Spanish teacher who was sharp and popular. The CP was lukewarm at best toward Castro, who was supported by the Cuban *Partido Socialista Popular* (as the Cuban Communists were called) only when his insurrection was about to succeed.

There was no magic moment that turned me into a New Leftist; it was a gradual process that led me to change my views. I like to say that I began to think for myself. Maybe it would be more accurate to say that I began to listen to ideas other than the ones presented by my parents and their friends and the left-wing periodicals that came into my childhood home.

I developed decidedly critical ideas about the Soviet Union, realizing that it was not democratic, also seeing its leaders as stodgy and boring, and also concerned about their lack of support for Cuba and for armed revolution elsewhere in Latin America. The Old Left was quick to label the New Left as infantile leftist or adventurist or to dismiss it as ideologically weak, while I and my New friends considered the Old Left to be, well, old and tired and boring and increasingly irrelevant and dishonest. My political activities in the period from 1958-64, when I was in college and graduate school, ranged from the Youth March for Integrated Schools (1958), picketing a Woolworth store at 110th St. and Broadway because Woolworth lunch counters in the south refused to integrate, writing and passing out leaflets for the Student Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (to warn of the danger of strontium 90, the result of fallout from above-ground tests). I canceled my subscription to the *National Guardian* when the newspaper made excuses for the Soviet testing, but I quietly returned to the paper because I was so used to it and did not have a good alternative. I was decidedly not attracted to ordinary liberal politics because it was too sedate and liberals were gradualists, not committed to radical change. I was ready for the New Left, but it really wasn't quite off the ground at this point. I was part of a group called ACTION at Columbia, comparable to other campus activist groups in the early 1960s—many of us were red diaper babies, but our focus was the campus. I was the editor of the *Columbia Daily Spectator* and used that position to promote some radical ideas. *Spectator* ran an editorial on the Sobell case (appealing for his release) which was attacked by Prof. Daniel Bell, a liberal sociologist (who, by the way, hated C. Wright Mills).

My career development at this point was greatly influenced by the turn of events in Cuba. I took my existing interest in journalism a step further and decided I wanted to become a foreign correspondent specializing in Latin America. I had already fulfilled my college's foreign language requirement, but decided to study a new language: Spanish. I also decided to obtain a master's degree in Latin American Studies, choosing an institute at Stanford University in California which had obtained a lot of publicity for exposing a secret CIA training camp for Cuban exiles in Guatemala in the months before the Bay of Pigs invasion. At Stanford, I studied yet another foreign language, Portuguese, the language of Brazil.

I was in California at Stanford in October 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis and I was one of three speakers at a public forum to criticize President Kennedy because I felt Castro was justified in doing what he needed to do to stop a U.S. invasion. That was a scary moment—the three of us were all Jewish and we had to endure anti-Semitic taunts. While at Stanford, I studied Marxist economics with Paul Baran,[16] and made friends with other leftists including Marvin and Barbara Garson[17] and Saul Landau. I also began to get in touch with the cultural changes that were taking place, and among the people I met was Ronnie Davis, leader of the San Francisco Mime Troupe (founded in 1959).

Since this weekend's conference focuses on the Vietnam era, I have to say that I am proud that my first public action on Vietnam came early, on May 2, 1964, when I attended a demonstration against U.S. intervention in Vietnam. I surely would not have known about this small demonstration if I were not in touch with the left in New York. I was at this time a student at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, working on my second masters degree. This May 2 action took place in the early months of the Johnson presidency at Frederick Douglass Circle, the intersection of 110th St. and Central Park West and was sponsored by an obscure Maoist group, soon to be called the May 2 movement in honor of this event.[18] My gut reaction against the war was a reflection of my Old Left allegiances, but my understanding of the war deepened when I read Robert Scheer's pamphlet *How the U.S. Got Involved in Vietnam*. Nineteen sixty-four was also the year that I first smoked pot.[19]

I spent three years in Latin America, 1964-1967, the first year as a Fulbright scholar to Brazil. A crucial point in my personal life was the curious dichotomy between my radical ideas and my ordinary ambitions for my personal life. At the point of my departure from the U.S. for Rio de Janeiro, I vaguely assumed I would get married and have children, even though I knew my inclinations

and most of my experiences were homosexual. Similarly, though I believed in socialist revolution, I assumed I deserved a Fulbright scholarship (administered, after all, by the U.S. Department of State), and I also assumed I would have a career as a foreign correspondent, preferably for *The New York Times*. Looking back on this phase of my life, I see a basic contradiction in the message I got from my parents: on the one hand, I was supposed to admire socialist heroes and values; on the other hand, seek a successful middle class professional life. (A quick addendum here: my parents wanted me to be a doctor, precisely because they felt a doctor could practice medicine and still be a radical while a journalist would be deprived of freedom of expression.)

In Brazil, I benefitted from friendships I had made with Amaury Guimarães de Souza and Bolivar Lamounier, Brazilian student radicals (later to become well-known academics), who trusted me because they knew I was a student of Paul Baran. Professor Baran was widely known and respected in Latin America, though he was vilified by Stanford alumni and virtually ignored by the U.S. economic profession. In Brazil, Chile, Peru, Uruguay and Argentina, I traveled widely and met people of many political stripes, but I was closest to independent leftists. I identified as a New Leftist and as a supporter of the Cuban Revolution, and that enabled me to overcome the widespread anti-American prejudice I found throughout the region. Of course, there were exceptions, people who couldn't tolerate any Norteamericano, people who may even have thought I was a CIA agent.

At one point, I got myself into trouble when I spoke against the Vietnam war at a rally sponsored by a Communist youth group at the University of Chile. Ralph Dungan, U.S. ambassador to Chile (Kennedy appointee), called me and another American into his office to express his outrage at us for speaking out against U.S. policy at a rally sponsored by Communist students. He said we should go home and run for Congress rather than criticize our own country. He threatened us with deportation and frankly he scared both of us, not into silence exactly, but he scared us for sure. I was living in Chile on an Inter-American Press Association scholarship and effectively dodging the draft, and I was afraid I would be drafted if my scholarship were canceled! During this time, I also launched an international petition drive entitled "We Are Ashamed of Our Country" and signed by a group I invented called "Committee of Americans Abroad for an Honorable Foreign Policy." I had hoped to obtain enough signatures and money to buy an ad in *The New York Times* to express the point of view that U.S. military action in Vietnam was in support of the wrong side and was making people around the world hate the United States, but unfortunately my effort was not successful. There are several pages in my FBI and CIA files about this effort!

I kept in touch with events in the U.S. by subscribing to the *National Guardian* and to *New Left Notes*, the newsletter of Students from a Democratic Society (SDS).[20] In Brazil, my sexual expression as a gay man became a big part of my life (I was in the stage of self-acceptance for the first time), and I also danced a lot, smoked a lot of pot, sun-bathed on the beach, and traveled widely, taking in everything I could, expanding my horizons. During this time, I had many articles published in *The New York Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor*, and a few in European left-wing magazines such as the *International Socialist Journal* and *New Left Review*.

When I returned to the U.S. in the summer of 1967, I hunted for a job on both the East and West Coasts. I was in San Francisco during the famous Summer of Love,[21] and I remember feeling rather confused. I smoked pot, but I wasn't a hippie. I came to the Haight-Ashbury with a curious look in my eye, but I certainly wasn't a tourist with a camera. I saw hippies asking for money from mid-Westerners with cameras, much as I had seen Indians in Guatemala ask me for money to take their picture. You know that line from the Bob Dylan song, "Something's happening here, but you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones?" Well, the truth is, I was no Mr. Jones. I had a pretty good idea that the hippies were rebelling against the status quo, and like me, they were for peace and they smoked pot. However, I also was in California to interview for a job at the *Los Angeles Times*, and my career ambitions and mentality made me pretty straight compared to the spaced out freaks on the streets of Haight-Ashbury.

After landing a job as a reporter for the *Washington Post*, I was truly on a fast track in my career. But the year was 1967. It was the year I saw "The Battle of Algiers," Gillo Pontecorvo's 1965 movie about the commitment of radical, armed revolutionaries, also the year that Che Guevara died fighting in the jungles of Bolivia, the year the movement against the war in Vietnam achieved major advances, especially the march on the Pentagon in October, and the year that the underground press spawned its own Liberation News Service.[22] Uncomfortable in my role as a reporter for the establishment media, and increasingly aware of the limitations placed on me because I was gay (still secretly, at this time), I quit the *Post* and began to work full-time in the underground press, joining Liberation New Service, a national clearinghouse of news and analysis from a radical perspective which supplied packets twice a week to underground (and increasingly campus) newsletters. I also became active as a member of Students for a Democratic Society and encouraged my friends to become involved in SDS, which I saw as leading the movement through its unfocused mixture of activism and vague leftist ideology.

My Old Left background motivated me in a couple of crucial areas. First, I did not feel comfortable with the pacifists who had an ideological bent against armed struggle and therefore did not entirely approve of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. I followed Lenin's maxim that the ruling class would not give up power without a fight, though I was never quite sure how I could be a warrior in such a fight because many of my instincts were indeed pacifistic—that is, I hated violence and was somewhat cowardly. Second, I wanted to influence others toward a "complete" ideological program that involved socialist values, anti-racist principles, in

other words, an all-purpose movement toward radical change and social justice.

I immersed myself full-time in SDS and LNS, living at first off money I had saved from scholarships and freelance journalism while in Latin America; later helping to developing a system of subsistence salaries for LNS staff ($35 a week salary plus meals bought with LNS money). LNS, by the way, raised a significant amount of money from left-wing sectors of Protestant churches. In retrospect, I think these Christians saw us as good-hearted young idealists working against war, while I think we saw them as an easy mark for money. We were lucky to get their money, and, as I think about it now, I regret that I didn't interact more honestly with these good church people. I wonder why they were so generous to us; they must have read the LNS packets with all the crude left-wing rhetoric (calling cops "pigs" and glorifying violence in the Third World). I also regret not interacting more honestly with the Black Panthers, who hung around LNS from time to time because we had printing presses and did work for them at virtually no cost. We at LNS were proud to have the Panthers around because they validated our politics; in fact, we knew little of them as human beings, and I had liberal friends who had much deeper relationships with black people.

I saw myself as a propaganda specialist for the New Left, even arguing that "propaganda" should be seen as something good, that is, propagating ideas and information that were being hidden by the establishment media,[23] and encouraging people to demonstrate and take action. I served as a kind of press attache at some national SDS meetings. There was a "giddy joy" (thanks to my LNS friend Katya Taylor, nee Nina Sabaroff, for that phrase) to a lot of what we did, but much of it was deadly serious. I don't think I had a reputation for having a great sense of humor, but I do remember, somehow, a lot of laughs and fun and silliness. Communal living, travel and street actions helped to create a big part of this camaraderie.

An aside: four years of college, two years of graduate school, three years in Latin America, and three years of intensive involvement in the New Left—this adds up to 12 years of practically no television viewing. I don't do well when people comment about "Gilligan's Island" or "Leave it to Beaver."

I went to many SDS meetings in NY and all over the U.S. —plus dozens of demonstrations. On two occasions in the late 1960s, I was arrested, once at Columbia University with 800 others during the April 1968 occupation,[24] once on a New York City subway station platform when I intervened, with a friend, on behalf of a black man who was being unjustly arrested by a white police officer. I had many other opportunities to be arrested, at demonstrations where some people engaged in civil disobedience, but I declined to go through that again, doubting its value. I wasn't particular sympathetic to the Catholic leftists who were constantly engaging in civil disobedience and getting themselves jailed. I was also arrested for shoplifting in 1971, at a time when some New Leftists justified such theft.[25] I stole a steak and a stick of butter from a Grand Union store in Oneonta, N.Y. and had to pay a fine. My tendency to shoplift was short-lived and minor. (Later, in the 1970s, I was prepared to be arrested during a demonstration at the Seabrook, N.H. Nuclear Power Plant, but a deal was struck with the authorities and there were no arrests. In 1980, I was arrested one more time, and hopefully for the last time—the charge was growing marijuana.)

I once heard someone say, perhaps in the early 1970s, that the New Left was pretty much the same thing as the Old Left. We may have smoked pot and absorbed new issues, such as feminism and even gay liberation, but the dogmatism and the rigidity was reminiscent of Stalinism. I also heard people say, often, that my Marxism was "just like religion," a charge that I absolutely hated, since I was so resolute in my atheism. But today I believe that leftists like myself were indeed a lot like religious zealots, with our union songs akin to hymns, our political chants reminiscent of prayers and our leftwing tracts not unlike the Bible.

Today, I no longer consider myself a Marxist or even a leftist. In 1969, I loved calling myself a "revolutionary communist," but I don't believe in either revolution or communism and I can't think of any label I'm entirely comfortable with. Libertarians tend to be overly ideological in their views and liberals tend to be too predictable, while conservatives tend to be mean-spirited. So I muddle through and try to be a good person, while avoiding the notion, once so dear to me, that life should be organized around a movement to change the world. I still believe in the need for change, but I don't make it my mission in life. I have a house and garden and a circle of friends. I am enrolled in the Democratic Party, and I belong to the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Massachusetts Audubon Society. I do not regret the collapse of the Soviet Union, no matter how terrible the recent events have been in eastern Europe. I do not trust the people who still admire Fidel Castro or the Cuban Revolution, because I think there is no basis in fact for this admiration. While I am uncomfortable when people say that the U.S. "is the greatest country in the world," I do admire a lot about this country, especially our Constitution. While I flirted with the idea of armed struggle and violent revolution for a while, I am glad my better instincts kept me out of the Weatherman faction of SDS (where many of my friends ended up).[26]

The most violent thing I did in the era of the New Left was throw mud at mounted police during Nixon's Counter-inaugural. That same night, outside the ball where Spiro Agnew was being feted, I ran toward a cop who had just arrested one of my co-demonstrators—I pulled with all my might to free the demonstrator and I kicked the cop. Instead of armed struggle, I call it "legged struggle." I also practiced target shooting with a .22 for a while. That was the extent of my involvement with violence.

Crucial to my political evolution were the birth of the gay liberation movement and two trips I took to Cuba, in 1969 and 1971. In Cuba, I discovered (not in a well-lit moment, but gradually, with thought) that the revolution I loved so dearly was built on lies, repression and tyranny.

The focal point for me was the persecution of gay men and lesbians in the Castro regime, but there was much more than that. The highly touted literacy campaign was a joke considering the powerful propaganda machine maintained by the government, featuring a lack of freedom of the press and the rote educational system where few questions could be asked, no doubts expressed. The distribution of resources was not nearly as even-handed as the government implied, and so-called Committees for the Defense of the Revolution were run by neighborhood busy-bodies.

In 1969 and 1970, I was part of a committee that formed the original SDS brigade, had my picture taken in the cane fields which appeared on a poster advertising the Venceremos Brigade, and I signed checks as the treasurer of the Venceremos Brigade organization.

All that changed quickly and I began to write and speak about the persecution of gay people in Cuba, which had adopted a Stalinist line and was engaged in serious repression of not only homosexuals, but also the Cuban variation of hippies, Jehovah's Witnesses, black nationalists, Trotskyists and dissidents of all stripes.[27]

My experience with gay liberation was exhilarating. A few months after the Stonewall Rebellion (June 1969),[28] I began attending meetings of the New York Gay Liberation Front. I joined a pioneering gay men's commune, immersing myself in gay liberation politics, and I left LNS behind. I was struck at the variety of people I met in the gay movement, especially the diversity in regard to race and class—more diversity than in the New Left, which was essentially a white middle-class intellectual or student phenomenon. As a gay activist, I participated in and helped organize many marches and demonstrations, and initially these were more frightening, psychologically at least, than anything I had done as an Old Leftist or a New Leftist. As an author and editor, I helped spread the word about gay oppression and liberation.[29]

Partly under the influence of psychedelic drugs that helped me get in touch with my love of nature, and partly in response to dogmatic tendencies emerging in the gay and lesbian movement, I left New York City and relocated in rural Massachusetts. Here, I continue to spend some of my time in an activist frame of mind, but I have had a more ordinary life as a newspaper reporter for a local daily, and most recently, in charge of public relations for a small community hospital.

From my upbringing in the Old Left, to my experience and adventures in the New Left and gay liberation, and finally to a more sedate and ordinary life in a rural community—I look back and see more continuity than contradiction. I retain an ethical system of caring for and sharing with my fellow human beings that is at the core of socialism.

However, I realize stifling dogmatism or political correctness in today's society, even within so-called progressive circles, reflect Old Left values, and these are inimical to me. Communist Party theoreticians had answers for everything, but now I am on the side of those who admit there may not be answers. I remember clearly that these same CP dogmatists spread the line that homosexuality was related to bourgeois decadence and could not be tolerated in a revolutionary society. These commissars analyzed each and every play, movie and painting to decide whether it served the interests of the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. Time and again, they were so sure of themselves. The intellectualized every move and every moment. Today, I don't have to immerse myself in dogma. I'm more concerned about living in harmony with nature and being kind to friends, neighbors and family, than I am with feeling part of a self-congratulatory political movement.

NOTES

1 C. Wright Mills is considered one of the "fathers" of the New Left. A dissident sociologist at Columbia University who emerged as a significant critic of postwar American society, he was extremely influential. See James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets* (NY: Simon and Shuster, 1987): 79-91. In addition, he expressed "his distaste for Marxist cant and Cold War dogmatics." He epitomized a left wing criticism of American society without Marxist dogma. In 1960, Mills published "Letter to the New Left" in the British journal *New Left Review*. (See *The New Left a Collection of Essays* ed. P. Long, Boston: Porter Sargent, 1969: 14-25).

2 The American Communist Party and their supporters had been strongly anti-fascist and supported Republican Spain against the intervention by Italian fascists and German Nazis, complaining bitterly about the false neutrality of the British, French and American governments. They were strong critics of the Munich plot which betrayed Czechoslovakia to the Nazis. Then, in 1939, the Soviets signed a non-aggression pact with the Nazis, protecting the Soviets from an invasion until 1941 but also freeing Hitler's eastern front so he could strike west at France and Britain. All of a sudden, the Communists in the U.S. became opposed to "Roosevelt's war-mongering." For many members this flip flop was too cynical to support.

3 The Soviets invaded Finland in 1940 in order to secure some territory that they felt would be dangerously close to Leningrad should they be subjected to a German invasion. The League of Nations condemned the Soviets for aggression and expelled them from membership.

4 In 1956, in a secret speech to the Soviet Communist Party, Nikita Khruschev acknowledged the truth of the claims made repeatedly by anti-communist and independent observers that Stalin had presided over mass executions, deportations and imprisonments as he consolidated his power in the 1930s and enforced collectivization upon a resisting peasantry. These executions did not merely include so-called "class enemies" but involved virtually an entire generation of Bolshevik revolutionaries including the top military and political leaders of the Soviet Union in the 1930s.

5 A Hungarian Communist government came to power in 1956 promising a move towards pluralism. The Soviets invaded to keep that from happening. After days of street battles where Hungarian civilians fought

bravely against Soviet tanks and troops, the country was suppressed. The Soviets arrested, secretly tried and executed the Hungarian leaders.

[6] The American Labor Party (ALP) was a New York State political party founded in 1936 originally by Socialist Party-related trade unions who wanted "to provide an electoral line where the traditionally Socialist-voting constituencies could comfortably vote for Franklin Delano Roosevelt." By 1941, the Communist Party had gained ascendancy in the Party and the old Socialists left to form the American Liberal Party, which, by the way, still exists in New York State. The ALP provided significant support for Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia. ("Without the ALP, LaGuardia almost certainly would have been a one-term mayor.")On the national scene, the Party was associated with the independent left-wing Congressman Vito Marcantonio, who remained in Congress until his defeat in 1950. My father, Louis Young, was an ALP candidate for New York State Assemblyman from Sullivan County in the early 1950s. The Party lost its New York State ballot status in 1954 and went out of existence in 1956. From the time the Liberal Party was formed in 1944, the ALP was consistently attacked as a communist front organization. Members who were not communists could certainly be classified as "fellow travelers." See *Encyclopedia of the American Left*: 24-25.

[7] For the history of this very important newspaper for countless red diaper babies, see James Aronson and Cedric Belfrage, *Something to Guard, The Stormy Life of the National Guardian, 1948-1967* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1978).

[8] Red-diaper babies grew up listening to a recording of an Alfred Hayes poem set to music by Earl Robinson, "I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night." (sung by Joan Baez at Woodstock in 1969). Hill was primarily known as an I.W.W. songwriter during his life but the end of his life (he was framed and executed for a murder in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1915) made him an internationally known martyr to the cause of left wing labor agitation. See *Encyclopedia of the American Left*: 311-12. Later I learned that Robinson worked closely in collaboration with Lewis Allan, the renowned left-wing lyricist. Lewis Allan was the pen name of Abel Meeropol, Michael Meeropol's adoptive father. The Robinson and Allan team is perhaps best known for "The House I Live In" and I remember a night in our living room (probably a CP meeting) when my parents showed a 16 mm film with Frank Sinatra singing that song, which was a kind of left-leaning yet highly patriotic American anthem. I recently learned that Earl Robinson had been a friend of my mother's sister, Ann (Goldfarb) (Saxe) Laven, who had worked in the left-wing theater in the 1940s and 1950s under the name Anne Gold. This feeling of "progressives" all belonging to an extended family—literally—was important to my sense of well being, and I think this was true for other red diaper babies.

[9] Morton Sobell was indicted with Julius and Ethel Rosenberg on a one-count conspiracy to commit espionage charge. Though no evidence was introduced to show he had anything to do with the alleged atom bomb espionage, he was given the maximum thirty year sentence and spend nineteen years in prison, including six years in Alcatraz. For his story, see Morton Sobell *On Doing Time* NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974).

[10] See James Weinstein, "Studies on the Left" in Paul Buhle, ed. *History and the New Left* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 113-117. See also Paul Buhle "Introduction," especially pp. 24-33.

[11] *Root and Branch* was founded by radical graduate students at Berkeley, including Maurice Zeitlin and Robert Sheer who later collaborated on *Cuba, Tragedy of a Hemisphere*. It was Sheer who wrote an important pamphlet about the origins of U.S. intervention in Vietnam, *How the U.S. Got Involved in Vietnam* for the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in 1964. It was very influential on me and many others of my generation. Along with Jim Petras, another left-wing scholar/writer, Zeitlin later became a friend and political mentor during my stay in Chile, 1965-66, when we were all living in Santiago.

[12] Rustin was an important African-American civil rights organizer. Jailed as a pacifist during World War II, he was a prominent intellectual socialist in the 1950s. He helped organize the massive March on Washington in 1963. For details, see *The Encyclopedia of the American Left*: 663-665. Long rumored to be a homosexual, Rustin acknowledged his gay identity somewhat publicly, and perhaps somewhat reluctantly, in the post-Stonewall [1969] era. Gay activists and historians often cite Rustin, along with Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes and blues singers Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, when they list accomplished gay and lesbian African-Americans for gay pride purposes. I had also been introduced to Hughes' work as a child.

[13] Harrington was originally involved in the socialist League for Industrial Democracy but later went on to the Socialist Party and finally, in 1973, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee. His book *The Other America* which documented the extent of poverty amidst the plenty of 1950s America is reported to have had a tremendous influence on President Kennedy and led, indirectly, to the launching of the "War on Poverty." See *The Encyclopedia of the American Left* pp. 290-292.

[14] Benjamin Davis was a member of the Communist Party who actually served two terms on the New York City Council (1943-47) as a result of a system of elections based on proportional representation. See Benjamin Davis, *Communist Councilman from Harlem* (NY: International Publishers, 1969).

[15] James O'Connor went on to publish a widely read radical approach to public finance entitled *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*. Currently, he edits a journal *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*. I was unfazed by the unsubstantiated rumors of Jim's dating habits (with college girls) and don't recall anyone in our circles making it an issue—as it might be today, either by radical feminists or school officials.

[16] Paul Baran had written what has become a modern Marxist classic *The Political Economy of Growth* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1957). For information about this very important figure, see Paul M. Sweezy and Leo Huberman, ed. *Paul A. Baran, A Collective Portrait* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1965).

[17] Marvin Garson went on to edit a Bay Area underground newspaper called the *San Francisco Express-Times*. Barbara Garson is perhaps best known for her play *MacBird*, with Lyndon Johnson in the role of MacBeth and the Kennedy brothers as Duncan and MacDuff. The play had originated as a skit at an anti-war demonstration. She has remained an active leftist writer, publishing *All the Live-Long Day*, an account of life on the assembly line.

[18] For the May 2nd Movement see Gitlin: 180-181. This group published the first "We Won't Go" statement where draft age men pledged not to fight in Vietnam. From this small initial effort, a nationwide campaign of draft resistance and even resistance within the military developed over the next eight years. See, for example, Michael Ferber and Staughton Lynd *The Resistance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971). There is a photograph of me (taken by Roz Payne, a photographer from Newsreel, the New Left film collective) burning my draft card at Columbia in 1968, but in fact the "draft card" was a xerox copy I had made intentionally for that purpose. My childhood friend Bernard Jaffe went to Canada during this time (and still lives there). An SDS friend whom I greatly admired, Bruce Dancis from Cornell University, served two years in jail for draft resistance.

[19] My use of marijuana and later of psychedelic drugs, including LSD, mescaline and mushrooms, had some significance. We used phrases such as "mind expansion" and I did find the drugs helpful in my personal growth and evolution. Looking back, I don't feel they dominated my life nor did me harm, though I certainly believe that personal growth and "liberation" can be achieved without the help of drugs. I learned, at some point, that the Communist Party and other old left groups, were very much opposed to this drug use. Like many New Leftists, I considered this to be part of the Old Left's stodginess or puritanism. Young CPers, with whom I had very little contact, were generally seen by me and others as "straight" and "uptight" especially when it came to drug use.

[20] For detailed historical analysis of SDS, see Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (NY: Random House, 1973).

[21] From the days of the Beat Poets, San Francisco had always been a center of cultural dissidence. It is not an accident that Allen Ginsberg debuted his famous 1955 poem *Howl* to a live audience in San Francisco. In an interview I did with Allen Ginsberg for *Gay Sunshine*, he discusses San Francisco and the "beat generation" in a gay context. This interview has been translated and published in several foreign languages. The interview is available in a chap book, *Allen Ginsberg: Gay Sunshine Interview with Allen Young* (San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1974). It is also available in *Gay Sunshine Interviews, Vol. I* ed. Winston Leyland (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1978). By the middle 1960s, rock 'n' roll and folk music and the writings of people like Bob Dylan were all combining to produce the beginnings of a dissident youth culture. By 1966, enough people attempting to live a new lifestyle had congregated in the San Francisco area to lead to a new label: hippies. In the summer of 1967 people who wanted to be hippies travelled en masse to San Francisco; people who wanted to *see* hippies did the same. See, for example, Gitlin: 200-230. For San Francisco, see Charles Perry *The Haight-Ashbury: A History* NY: Random House, 1984).

[22] See Abe Peck. *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (NY: Pantheon, 1985). LNS is portrayed in a humorous, well-written but self-serving account by Ray Mungo. It is entitled *Famous Long Ago: My Life and Hard Times With Liberation News Service* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970). For the Pentagon march, see Norman Mailer *The Armies of the Night*. For a general survey of the anti-war movement, including the Pentagon demonstration, see Fred Halsted, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (NY: Monad Press, 1978).

[23] A good discussion of the U.S. Press and politics is contained in James Aronson, *The Press and the Cold War* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc. 1970).

[24] For the details of the Columbia University occupation, see Jerry L. Avorn and members of the staff of the *Columbia Daily Spectator*, *Up Against the Ivy Wall* ed. Robert Friedman (NY: McClelland and Stewart, 1968). I had to pay a fine of $200 or $250 for criminal trespass, based on the advice of "movement lawyers" who were overworked and were pressed to use their time wisely. Arrestees who were enrolled Columbia students succeeded in getting their charges dropped, and paid no fines, but the University did not extend this largesse to alumni such as myself. We were undoubtedly seen as "outside agitators," a phrase that was commonly used in the media when discussing campus uprisings.

[25] See Abbie Hoffman, *Steal This Book* for some zany rationalizations of the "revolutionary" nature of theft.

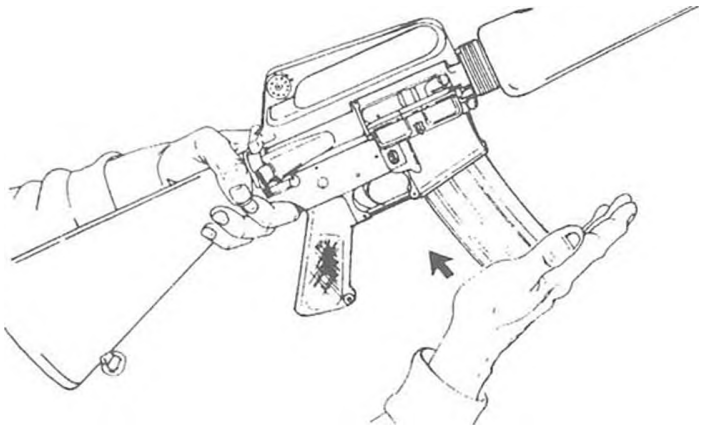
[26] For the rise of the Weatherman faction of SDS, see Hal Jacobs, ed. *Weatherman* (Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1970). For the general turn of the movement towards violence, see Gitlin: 377-408.

[27] The Cuba issue is discussed in a number of items in *Out of the Closets* (20th anniversary edition with new introductions) NY: NYU Press, 1992). I developed my thoughts more fully a decade later in *Gays Under the Cuban Revolution* (San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1981). The issue of Cuba is also discussed by Allen Ginsberg in the *Gay Sunshine* interview. See also, Reinaldo Arenas, *Before Night Falls: A Memori* (NY: Viking, 1993). Arenas was one of cuba's most important modern writers, coming to the U.S. via the Mariel boatlift in 1980. The book discusses his suppression as a writer and imprisonment as a homosexual in Cuba.

[28] The Stonewall Inn was a gay bar in New York's Greenwich Village. It was raided by police, a rather ordinary

occurrence in an era when most homosexuals hid their sexuality. Instead of running and hiding out of fear of the exposure that arrest would bring, the patrons of Stonewall fought back. Several nights of rioting followed. The modern gay liberation struggle is dated from that event. It signalled that just as African-Americans had stood up in dignity to demand their full human rights, and just as women had begun to do the same towards the end of the 1960s, homosexuals, too, were now demanding full recognition for their humanity. The Gay Liberation Front was organized in New York in the weeks that followed. [See "Gay/Lesbian Liberation Movement" and "Stonewall Riots" *Encyclopedia of the American Left*].

[29] I have had a long, fruitful collaboration and friendship with Professor Karla Jay, who teaches English and Women's Studies at Pace University in New York City. She is currently the editor for the New York University Press book series, "The Cutting Edge: Lesbian Life and Literature." Together we have edited three books *Out of the Closets...*, *After You're Out: Personal Experiences of Gay Men and Lesbian Women* (NY: Links Books, 1975) and *Lavender Culture* (NY: NYU Press, 1994) (with new introductions). We wrote *The Gay Report: Lesbians and Gay Men Speak Out About Sexual Experiences and Lifestyles* (NY: Summit Books, 1979) based on thousands of survey questionnaires.



Memories of a Near Red Diaper Baby: The Intersection of the Old Left, the New Left, and Feminism

Paper presented at the conference on the Sixties sponsored by Vietnam Generation, Inc. Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, CT, Nov. 5, 1994.

Barbara Epstein, History of Consciousness Board, University of California, Santa Cruz, 95060.

My story is that of a near red diaper baby, a would-be red diaper baby. I did not grow up in the sort of Communist household that I think of as the home of a real red diaper baby: both of my parents had been members of the Communist Party, but both left it in the late forties, when I was a small child. Nevertheless, I grew up in what might be described as the orbit of the Communist Party: a politically progressive, culturally avant-garde, largely Jewish community in New York. I lived with my mother in Greenwich Village until I was fourteen, when we moved to Columbia Heights, in uptown Manhattan. Both my elementary school (City and Country School, which I entered in 1947, at the age of 3, and graduated from in 1958) and my high school (Elisabeth Irwin High School, which I attended from 1958 to 1962) were progressive both educationally and politically; both were associated with the left.[1] I grew up close enough to the left to know that I wanted to be part of it. When I was in high school I became actively involved in the peace movement; intellectually and culturally I was influenced by the socialist left and the distinct but overlapping Jewish left.

For someone not quite born into the left my experience was unusual: I became part of it at a time—the late fifties—when it was still quite small and beleagered. I was part of a left culture that most of those who joined the movements of the sixties—the New Left, the anti-war movement, the women's movement—never saw. Many women were drawn into the left through involvement in the women's movement. I saw the women's movement from the other side, as someone who had been part of the left for years before it emerged. I think that this story is worth telling because it reveals a moment in the history of left politics and culture in the US that tends to be overlooked in the usual telling of the story of the movements of the sixties—according to which the New Left was the first sign of resistance to the presumably all-encompassing political and cultural conservativism of the fifties.

In the community in which I grew up progressive politics were, if not exactly assumed, at least a major cultural current. My parents were divorced when I was very young; both left the Communist Party, my mother to remain politically progressive, my father to become increasingly conservative. My community was at least to some degree interracial. My mother's closest friend, a white woman, was married to a black man; I spent a good deal of my early childhood with their two sons. At both

my elementary school and my high school efforts were made to include what we then called "minority" children—black, Puerto Rican, Asian—in a school population that was otherwise overwhelmingly Jewish. (At one point someone proposed, as a joke—sort of—that City and Country establish a fellowship for WASP children, so that we would meet some of them. The proposal was turned down).

No one, in the community that I lived in as a child, openly identified him or herself as a member of the Communist Party. But in retrospect I am sure that many of my mother's friends, some of the teachers and parents at my elementary school, had had some connection with the Party. We learned black history, labor history, the history of Jewish resistance to fascism. We knew that McCarthyism was evil. We knew that the Rosenbergs were people like us, part of our community, that their deaths were an attack on us.

Nevertheless, because no one talked openly about the left or the Communist Party, when I discovered the left it seemed to me that I had discovered it on my own. In the fall of 1958 I started the ninth grade at Elisabeth Irwin (the same school that Mike Meeropol attended, two years ahead of me). I had wanted to go to EI because I had loved City and Country, which was something like what might today be called an alternative school, and I understood that EI was the high school that was most like it. When I graduated from City and Country I still had no conscious awareness of politics. I was vaguely aware that I was part of a minority community (largely Jewish, interracial, politically progressive), but this was so much part of everyday life that I never thought of it as a political issue. I did not realize until later, for instance, that City and Country tilted toward a (Norman Thomas) Socialist politics, Elisabeth Irwin toward sympathy with Communism. I later learned that in the thirties there had been conflicts between the two, but that during the fifties both found themselves in more or less the same category of the politically suspect.

Discovering Politics

It was my first assignment at Elisabeth Irwin that began to open my eyes to political issues. In the ninth grade social sciences class we were told to write papers on the gubernatorial elections then taking place in New York; the teacher told us to interview the Democrats, the Republicans, and the Liberals, and added that anyone who wanted to do a particularly good job might also interview the Independent Socialists. I wanted to do a good job on my first assignment in high school, so I went to see the Independent Socialists.[2] I interviewed Annette Rubenstein,[3] of the National Guardian, who tried to explain to me that we lived in a capitalist society, and how socialism would be different and better. This sounded intriguing to me. I asked my mother what she thought; she said that she agreed that socialism would be better than capitalism. I next went to see the Republicans, told them that I had talked to the Socialists, and asked them what they thought of socialism. They were horrified, and asked me what a nice young lady like me was doing talking to Socialists.

I think that was what did it for me. I went back to the Independent Socialists and said that I wanted to learn more. They told me about a study group for high school students, which turned out to be connected with the Trotskyist Young Socialist Alliance.[4] There I read Engels, Plekhanov, Marx. I found this much more interesting than anything I was reading in my social sciences class, or for that matter any other of my high school classes. I got permission from my social sciences teacher to forget about the New York gubernatorial elections and instead write a report on
Marxism and socialism. I spent my year in ninth grade reading about Marxism and interviewing people in the various left parties in New York. By the end of the year I was convinced, and I turned in a paper in which I explained—on a fourteen-year-old level—why Marxism and socialism made sense to me.

It happened that our ninth grade teacher was at Elisabeth Irwin on an exchange program; he was not particularly left wing, and was upset about what I was doing. He refused to allow me to read my paper in class, although all the other students had presented their papers. I encouraged my friends to lobby him on my behalf; in the end I was allowed to present my paper. In spite of the fears of this particular teacher, I was beginning to realize that I was in a school in which many of the teachers and students were sympathetic to the left; this made entry into left politics much easier for me.

Meanwhile I was also gradually becoming an activist. In 1959, during my sophomore year in high school, I joined Student Sane, the student wing of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy. Over the next few years I was one of a small group of high school kids who built what became a quite extensive network of high school peace groups in New York City and the surrounding suburbs. The air raid drills that had been established when we were in elementary school were still in effect. Our view was that with the new leader of the Soviet Union talking about Peaceful Coexistence, the US was needlessly keeping the Cold War going, and that the function of the air raid drills was largely to instill fear, to make people feel that they needed the bomb to be safe from the Soviet Union. Each year we organized protests against the annual air raid drills. When I was in the tenth grade we encouraged kids around New York to refuse to take part in the drills. This was so effective that the next time the air raid drill was held after school hours. In 1960 we organized high school students to join a protest organized by pacifists outside City Hall, which would involve refusing to take cover after the air raid sirens sounded. Hundreds of people came to this protest, including large numbers of students. The police roamed the edges of the crowd, making arrests, but the paddy wagons would not hold enough people to make a dent in the size of the crowd. That was the last air raid drill in New York City.

During my high school years we, the students in Sane, were actually engaged in two battles: in addition to fighting the authorities over such issues as air raid drills, we were also conducting a battle with the adults in

our own organization. In the spring of 1960, Sane organized an astonishingly successful public meeting over the issue of nuclear fallout. The crowd filled Madison Square Garden; it seemed that, after years of McCarthyism, fear, and apathy, a mass peace movement was emerging. The main organizer of the event, Henry Abrams, was a leftist who was widely regarded as having some connection to the Communist Party, either a member or a sympathizer. A few days after the Madison Square Garden meeting Senator Dodd[5] summoned Norman Cousins, the head of Sane, to a meeting and raised the issue of Communists in Sane. Cousins said that he would see that Communists were removed from leadership positions in the organization.

As a result the Sane National Board issued an order: anyone in a position of leadership, down to the level of local chapters, was required to sign a statement to the effect that he or she was not a member of the Communist Party. Many members, many entire chapters, especially those in and around New York City, left the organization in protest. The students remained in the organization but refused to sign. The battle between the students and the adult organization became the focal point of generalized generational distrust. We saw the adults as sell-outs, hypocrites, people so concerned with maintaining their legitimacy that they were willing to accept the myths of the Cold War. Placing ads in the New York Times, signed by prominent people, seemed to be their favorite form of political action; we regarded this approach with contempt, and spent our time organizing demonstrations that we hoped would be large and noisy. The adults could not conceive that any well-informed, well-intentioned person would not share their hostility to Communism. Our opposition to their anti-Communism convinced them that we were either card-carrying Communists—or something so close to it that lack of Party membership was irrelevant. In any event, we were young hot-heads who were undermining their public stance of respectability.

This conflict touched feelings, on both sides, that ran fairly deep. The adults were caught up in hostilities on the left; we reminded them of their Communist adversaries. I suspect that we also reminded some of them of their own teenage children. We were also shaped by the recent history of the left in the US. We thought that anti-Communism was stupid and co-operation with McCarthyism was cowardly. Many of us were sympathetic to Marxism and in favor of some sort of socialism. The adults also reminded at least some of us of our own parents.

At one point Eric Holtzman, the head of Student Sane (and a graduate student), came to a meeting of representatives of high school Sane chapters. He told us that at the last Board meeting (which he, as the head of Student Sane, attended) one of the adults had raised a complaint about a member of Student Sane—my friend Peter, at the time fifteen years old. While using the mimeograph machine in the Sane office, Peter had gotten into an argument with one of the adults about the issue of excluding Communists. The adult had said that Communists could not be allowed in Sane because they were required by the Communist Party to support any position taken by the Soviet Union. Peter said he didn't think that was the case. Several days later Peter returned, pulled a copy of the constitution of the Communist Party, USA out of his pocket, and showed the adult in question a clause assuring members of their right to dissent. The adult, horrified by this, had reported at the next Board meeting that members of High School Sane were running around with copies of the constitution of the Communist Party in their back pockets. Eric said that we should stop trying to argue with the adults, there was no way of getting them to see reason, we would only get ourselves in trouble. We agreed. We passed a resolution urging members of High School Sane not to talk with adults unless it was unavoidable.

The year these issues came to a head I was the chair of High School Sane; I therefore found myself at the center of the conflict. In December of 1961 we held the first national convention of Student Sane. About a week before the convention someone from the Sane office called to ask me about a letter that they had received, signed with my name, which implied that I was a member of the Communist Party. I said that I had not sent any such letter, but refused to say whether or not I was a member of the Communist Party (in fact, at seventeen, I was too young to be a member of the Party; they would not have had me even if I had wanted to join. But the atmosphere in Sane was too heated for anyone to think of such technicalities). At the convention rumors were circulated about the "Communists" in the organization, and a few students who were working with the adults managed to get through a rule that anyone running for office be required to state his or her view of the Soviet Union. In spite of all this the candidates supported by the existing leadership—the group of activists who had built the organization—were voted into office. A month later, the adults sent us a letter in which they described us as ranging from card-carrying Communists to readers of the National Guardian (evidently, in their minds, only a shade less evil than Party membership), and told us that either we could hold new elections and allow a "genuinely democratic" leadership to be elected, or they would break their ties with us. We broke our ties with them.

I don't think it ever occured to me that there was anything remarkable about my leadership role in Student Sane—as a girl, that is. I was certainly aware that it was unusual for a teenager, in those days, to be spending her time organizing illegal demonstrations and publically refusing to deny her (nonexistent) membership in the Communist Party—but it seemed no more unusual for a girl than for a boy, and in fact our little group of core activists included both boys and girls. Most of my friends' parents were uneasy about their political activity—but how much pressure parents applied to get their children to stop had more to do with what the parents in question were like than with the gender of the children. One of the central activists, a girl, had parents who seemed entirely oblivious to her political activities. Another, a boy, had parents who had narrowly escaped Auschwitz; they were so fearful of repression that they forbade him to have anything to do with left politics. He used to sneak out his

bedroom window to come to meetings. In my case, my father, an ex-Communist who had become quite conservative, was extremely unhappy about my left-wing views, but because he did not live with me and my mother, he knew relatively little about what I was doing. My mother had no objections on principle to what I was doing. She was concerned that my politics might get me into trouble, but took the view that my decisions were up to me.

The movement circles that I was part of in New York were small, but they went beyond Student Sane. Many of the students at Elisabeth Irwin were to some degree involved in political activity. Every year the student body took on a political project: one year it was participation in the student marches on Washington for integrated schools, another year it was support for Sane, another it was support for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (a left-led, and, for the time, strikingly interracial organization, which was organized in 1960 to oppose US intervention against the Cuban Revolution). I occasionally attended classes at the School for Marxist Studies; I remember taking a course from Herbert Aptheker. Along with friends from Elisabeth Irwin and elsewhere I walked on picket lines in front of Woolworth's. I was also involved in left Zionism. I spent two summers on a kibbutz—I was drawn by the romantic, communitarian version of socialism expressed in the kibbutz movement. I participated in HaShomer HaTzair, the Marxist-Zionist youth organization, in New York. In addition to its connection to the kibbutz movement in Israel, HaShomer was a link backwards in time to Jewish resistance to fascism in Europe: HaShomer members had played a prominent role in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.[6]

The circles of young radical activists that I was part of revolved around communities that were autonomous but also often overlapped; they were held together by political values, comradeship, and friendship—between boys and girls as well as between members of each sex. There were romantic relationships, but it was the sense of comradeship, the emphasis on community, that held the movement together. In retrospect it is clear that leaders in this community (or these linked communities) of young radicals were more likely to be men than women—but there were many more women (or girls, as we would have said then) among the leaders than would be true a few years down the road, in the New Left.

The political culture that I am describing was influenced by the Old Left—it included many red diaper babies, and it built on the legacy of radicalism of the thirties—but it was not entirely the same as the Old Left. It lacked the connections to a militant labor movement that had been key to the Old Left; it had more of the flavor of a youth and student movement. It was also different than the New Left: unlike the New Left our movement was implicitly socialist and anti-imperialist. It was understood that whatever the immediate issue—civil rights, peace—the overriding objectives were socialism, and the dismantling of US world power.

This post-Old Left, pre-New Left was largely Jewish, and I think most extensive and most developed in New York City. This political culture had some impact on the New Left, particularly in the state universities, such as UC Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin, where there were large numbers of red diaper babies and others who in one way or another had become radicals in the years before the New Left itself emerged. SLATE, the UC Berkeley radical student party of the late fifties and early sities, included many such people. The leadership of SLATE was mostly male, but there were women leaders, and there were many women who, while not leaders of the organization, were respected activists. Some of the women who had been part of SLATE later had ambivalent reactions to the women's movment, reactions that struck me as having something in common with mine.

SDS and the Communist Party at Harvard-Radcliffe

I did not go to one of the universities with a large community of red-diaper babies and other already-radicalized students. In 1962 I entered Radcliffe (which was by that time so thoroughly integrated with Harvard that it was a women's college in little more than name). There was a small group of liberal/left students, mostly centered around Tocsin, a peace organization; there was also a small socialist club. In the fall of 1964 we organized a campus SDS chapter, which became the center of student radicalism. Meanwhile, during my first year, I had joined the Communist Party, which had a small Harvard club (by the sixties the term "club" had been substituted for the term "cell" in an effort to sound more American and less conspiratorial). I joined the Party partly out of my experience in the peace movement as a high school student (the people whose politics I sympathized with were attacked as Communists, many of them identified with the Communist tradition, and besides, the Communists had been the only group on the left that had been consistently supportive and helpful toward us). I also joined partly out of a romantic view of the movements of the thirties and the Party's role in those movements, and partly because, in 1962, I couldn't see anyone else who was trying to organize a movement with socialist politics.

Through my college years I was simultaneously a member of the Communist Party and SDS, but I felt more committed to the Party than to SDS. In the Party it seemed to me that on the whole other Party members, including men, treated me as an equal and listened to me with respect. In SDS I often felt pushed aside. This may have been partly a result of subtle cultural differences. In the Party, my history as a leader of the high school peace movement in New York, the fact that I was a socialist and knew something about Marxism, earned me respect—as did, of course, the fact that I was willing to join the Communist Party, hardly a common decision for a college freshman in 1962. In SDS, which was mostly made up of liberal students who were beginning to question liberalism, my already-radical politics made me something of an oddity and my membership in the Party made me odder yet—not to say threatening. Though I was at one point on the steering committee of the Harvard/Radcliffe SDS chapter, and had many friends in SDS, I never felt

entirely assimilated into the organization. I was not the only Party member who was simultaneously an active member of SDS, but I was the only woman in this position. The fact that I was a woman, and perhaps more than that the fact that I was not assertive enough to carve out a unique space for myself, left me feeling a little marginal.

One difference between the Party and SDS, in the early sixties, was that the Party regarded "male supremacy" as something to be opposed—while SDS had not yet begun to think about the issue. The Party's understanding of what would later be called sexism was very limited: it did not include any criticism of the family or of conventional male and female roles; it referred mostly to the need for gender equality in public life, and the need to promote women's involvement in the left. But this was better than nothing, which was what prevailed in SDS.

I remember once, while I was a member of the steering committee of Harvard/Radcliffe SDS, reading in the student paper one morning that SDS had decided to hold a demonstration that day. I was surprised, because I had not been included in any discussion of this. I called a friend of mine, also a member of the Communist Party, and also on the SDS steering committee. He told me that he and the other two members of the steering committee (all men, all living in the same Harvard House) had decided late the night before to hold the demonstration. It was too late to call me, he said, and certainly too late to call me to a meeting; women were not allowed in the Harvard Houses after a certain hour.

I protested that the decision should have been held off until I could be consulted; he argued that what the New Left was about was spontaneity. I raised this at a meeting of the SDS steering committee; no one saw anything wrong with what had happened. Since my friend was a member of the Party, I raised it at a Party meeting. It was agreed that this was an example of male chauvinism. It was impressed upon my friend that he, at least, as a Communist, should have protested against a decision being made without me. He apologized.

This story suggests differences between the Party and early SDS that went beyond their respective politics of gender. My friend was right: the New Left was about spontaneity; the Party was not. In a context in which men had advantages over women (in this case, three men and one woman on the steering committee—and the editor of the student paper down the hall from the three men), spontaneity was a lot more likely to mean women than men being disregarded. The Party had a structure that was conducive to dealing with individual member's complaints; SDS did not. Not that Party clubs always dealt with issues of discrimination in as straightforward a manner as this: in the thirties, for instance, internal charges of racism were often used in a quite opportunistic manner (there were public "trials" of white party members accused of racism, the purpose of which was in fact not to determine who had done what but to publicize the party's anti-racism).

But the Party club at Harvard did not have enough power or influence, at this point at least, for posturing of this sort to have any purpose. The Party club was really a group of more or less like-minded friends, mostly red diaper babies or in some way products of Old Left culture, who were actually hybrids, somewhere between an Old Left and New Left mentality. The Party club was in a sense a support system for socialists who wanted to be part of the New Left, to find some way of negotiating it as socialists —perhaps even influence it a little. There was room, in this context, for concern about how individual Party members were being treated.

Not that the community offered by the Party was perfect by any stretch of the imagination, or its anti-sexism particularly reliable. For most of my years in college I was a member of the Party's National Youth Commission, and therefore more firmly identified with the Party than others in my club. Sometimes young Communists who were also in the New Left liked to be able to distance themselves from the Party when they chose to—and in fact the male leaders of the club, when I made a mistake, were not always above agreeing with anti-Communists in the periphery of SDS that it was because I was a Communist. One summer I worked for SDS, running the SDS office with my boyfriend, an SDS member who had also recently joined the Party. At one point a meeting was called to which several supporters of SDS were invited, including Martin Peretz, a Government professor. At the last moment the place of the meeting had to be changed. I was to make the phone calls; I forgot to call Peretz. He was left standing in the rain, ringing a doorbell that no one answered. He was furious. The next day he called SDS to complain that I had excluded him because I was a Communist and did not like his politics. My comrades, hearing about this, came over to berate me for my supposed attempt to manipulate the meeting by excluding Peretz. No one seemed to believe that I had simply forgotten to call him.[7] My boyfriend, who like the others wanted Peretz's approval, agreed with the criticisms of me. My impression was that my Party comrades were willing to take my boyfriend's word more seriously than mine not only because he was male but also because he was a WASP, from a prominent upper-class family—a real catch for the Party. But the real point was that by agreeing with Peretz they could all placate him and to a certain degree distance themselves from the Party, or at least from its negative image, which was projected onto me.

In fact, as the sixties wore on it made less and less sense to be a member of the Communist Party. The New Left, by this time mostly focussed around opposition to the war in Vietnam, had become a mass movement among students and other young people. The Communist Party had some legitimate criticisms of the New Left/anti-war movement—most importantly, the Party criticized the anti-war movement for becoming too radical too fast, for aiming at revolution, or at least talking about it, when it had little more than a student base that could not conceivably carry out a revolution. This, along with the Party's cultural stodginess, the hostility at least of most of the adults in the Party to the cultural changes taking place among young radicals, gained the Party a reputation as conservative and irrelevant. And in fact the Party

was increasingly irrelevant: all it could do was to carp from the sidelines while the New Left and then the anti-war movement took the center of the stage, and, for better or for worse, transformed the nature of radicalism in the US. One could argue that the Communist Party had not been relevant since the nineteen thirties, or perhaps until just before World War Two. In a sense the question for the Communist Party, and for any socialist organization in the United States, is: what is the role of a socialist organization in a society in which socialist revolution is not even remotely on the agenda?

In the thirties, the Party's answer to that question was that the role of socialists was to lead the opposition to fascism (which meant fighting in Spain, opposing Nazism while such opposition was still a minority position, opposing racism in the US), and promoting working class power by spearheading the organization of the CIO. Once the CIO was organized and the US entered World War Two it became less clear what the role of the Party was. After the war, with the emergence of McCarthyism and the expulsion of Communists from most of the labor movement, the Party shrivelled into a beleagered sect, dominated by the issues of the past. Young people like myself who joined the Party in the early sixties did so, I think, largely out of a kind of nostalgia, a desire to sustain a culture, a particular system of meaning, that was fading, or had already faded.

Some of the young people who joined the Party in the early sixties were from Communist families; they had grown up with the belief that radicalism meant Communism, that one could not be a self-respecting person without being a Communist. I remember one Harvard student, for instance, who joined the Party, as his act of protest against Kennedy at the time of the Cuban missile crisis. After he joined he called his mother, in New York, and told her that he had just had his Bar Mitzvah (in those days, one did not say over the phone that one had joined the Communist Party). His mother understood immediately what he meant, and congratulated him. Most red diaper babies, however, were not particularly tempted to join the Party. They had been shaped by the culture of the Old Left in ways that often made it possible for them to make particular contributions to the New Left and the other movements of the sixties. But they had seen the weaknesses of the Party first hand, and, in most cases, wanted to find something better.

In a sense I joined the Party because I was not a red diaper baby, but wished I had been. For me, the left was the answer to an impossible family situation, a way of constructing community, and a sense of meaning, out of isolation and chaos. My parents had both been Communists, but my father left the Party, in the mid-forties, to begin a political trajectory to the right: by the time I was in college he was voting Republican and supporting the war in Vietnam. My mother left the Party somewhat later than my father, remained progressive in her views, but was not involved in political activity. During the thirties and early forties enormous numbers of people, particularly intellectuals and people interested in socialreform, especially if they lived in New York, had some connection with the Party—the Party has been described as a "revolving door" during this period. My father was a doctor whose identity was tied up in his efforts to be an artist and an intellectual; my mother was first a teacher in, and then the director of, a day care center for the children of working mothers. By the time I was five or six my father had become hostile to radicalism, and my mother had also left the Communist Party and was at most on the fringes of the radical community. The world of committed radicals seemed warm and alive to me in a way that contrasted sharply with my family. My father was in fact more or less unaware that I was coming in contact with the left through the schools that I attended; if he had known this, he probably would have tried to have me withdrawn. When I became involved with the left he was appalled and furious. As mentioned above, my mother was uneasy about my radicalism, partly out of fears for me, mostly because she wanted to avoid tensions with my father.

I suspect that many of us who were born in the postwar years grew up in families that deviated from the image of family life that prevailed at the time—the blissful nuclear unit in which all emotional needs were filled, in which everyone knew his or her place and was happy to fill it. I think that the constraints and disappointments of middle class family life were a major source of the determination, felt by many activists in the sixties, to construct alternative paths for themselves, and for the feminist revolt against conventional family roles. My family, however, was so far from the norm that it made rebellion against conventional structures seem beside the point. My parents had been married in name only. They never lived together, and the marriage was secret. The day I was brought home from the hospital my father demanded a divorce. The reason for this unusual state of affairs was that my father was living with another woman, whom he employed as nurse/secretary in his office, and was engaged in a long-term affair with yet a third woman, who was married, and, before and after I was born, had several children who might or might not have been my father's children.

Though my father visited our house frequently, I did not know where he lived. I was not told until I was fourteen that he had married six years earlier, and had a family. My mother had agreed to a secret marriage with a man who was not prepared to live with her because she did not feel capable of sustaining an intimate relationship with anyone. This limitation extended to me. I survived my childhood largely through my friendship with Elinor, a little girl whom I met in school at the age of three, who also had difficult parents. Throughout our childhoods we formed a crucial, utterly reliable support system for one another.

If my friendship with Elinor saved my childhood, it was my involvement with the left that saved my adolescence. I joined the left during what appears in retrospect to have been one of its most generous moments. In the late fifties and early sixties the left was very small but, after the long winter of McCarthyism, beginning to grow again. The result was that anyone who became part of the left was likely to be greatly appreciated by everyone else; we were much more aware of what we had in common

than what divided us, grateful to find a few fellow spirits, pleased by any signs that the movement was growing. It was a very optimistic moment. In some ways the emergence of the New Left itself, centered in SDS, was a step backwards from the radical culture of the late fifties and very early sixties that had preceded it: the pre-New Left culture was more interracial, more conscious of its links to the movements that preceded it, more radical (that is, more willing to criticize capitalism and espouse socialism)—and there was more room in it for women's activism and gender equality. In other ways the New Left/early SDS was a step forward. It appealed to a new constituency: liberal, middle class white students with no radical background. It allowed liberal students to examine the hypocrisy of mainstream, Cold War liberalism, to express their outrage—and to gradually move towards radicalism.

Luckily for me, the left of the late fifties and early sixties was a warmer place than the outside world, and for the most part a place where one could say what one thought and be listened to with respect. But there were limits—especially for women. My freshman year I made two friends at Radcliffe; the three of us joined Tocsin, and then SDS.[8] One of the two, Sarah, had come to college already thinking of herself as a feminist and a socialist (her parents had been Communists, one of her aunts had been an organizer of working class women, and a suffragist). In our discussions with each other Sarah often raised the issue of feminism, and criticized the way women were treated in Tocsin and SDS. But if Sarah, or either of the other of us, were to mention feminism in a meeting, the men were likely to look at us as if there were something wrong with us. It did not seem worth it to pursue the topic outside of our conversations with each other. This did not affect our commitment to the left; it was still a better place to be than anywhere else that we knew of.

The New Left in the Late 1960s: The Emergence of the Women's Movement

The question of how women were treated in the movement became more pressing as the movement became larger, angrier, less attentive to internal process. In the early sixties the New Left was small enough that it was possible to integrate new people, to construct a culture in which a kind of decency and mutual sensitivity on the whole prevailed. This was disrupted by the war in Vietnam; by 1966 opposition to the war was dominating political
activity, students were streaming into SDS, which was at the center of anti-war activity, and an atmosphere of impatience and anger was replacing the earlier orientation toward building something like what southern civil rights activists called "the beloved community."[9] Demonstrations became huge and unruly. By this time I was at Berkeley, where radicalism was generally understood to mean, among other things, a skepticism towards potentially bureacratic structures, a reluctance to become bogged down in time-consuming, democratic procedures. There was no membership organization at the center of the movement, playing the role that SDS had played at Harvard and elsewhere. Instead, each major demonstration or series of demonstrations was organized by an ad hoc committee, composed of what appeared to be self-appointed leaders, predictably almost always men.

The movement began to flirt with violence in a way that would barely have been thinkable several years earlier, not only in response to the war, but around other issues as well. In 1969 there was a strike on the Berkeley campus for a Department of Ethnic Studies. The two principal organizations directing the strike were the Third World Liberation Front, a mostly black student group, and AFT 1570, the teaching assistant's union, of which I was a member. At one point a demonstration was held during which the police came onto campus, arrested a number of people (for picketing in a particular place where picketing was forbidden by the administration). A riot broke out; the police chased protesters around campus and beat a number of people. That evening I attended a meeting of the steering committee of AFT 1570, as the History Department representative; it was argued that in order to keep the strike going there should be another demonstration within the next few days, and that the police should again be induced to come on campus and provoked into violence. I argued against provoking violence. Only one person—a regular member of the steering committee, and a Communist—agreed with my criticisms. He called me later and asked me to repeat what I had said at the steering committee meeting at the next general meeting of the union. I agreed. At the next general meeting I described the discussion that had taken place at the steering committee meeting and said that I thought that provoking violence would in the long run destroy the left, that if we had to do that to keep the strike going, perhaps we should not keep the strike going. I was virtually booed off the stage. The leaders of the union stopped speaking to me, many of my friends ostracized me, and for years subsequently I heard myself described as an "objective racist" (presumably, because the Third World Liberation Front was pressing for greater militancy, and because I was raising questions about the conduct of a strike whose aim was the establishment of a Third World College).

The prevailing attitude of everything-for-the-struggle, dissenters-be-damned enhanced the power of movement leaders (especially in the context of lack of democratic controls), widened the gap between men and women, and made authoritarian and sexist behavior in the movement more common. I frequently found myself being told what to do by men who felt entitled by their movement status to hand out orders. I was given a hard time in particular for not participating in illegal demonstrations that might lead to being thrown out of graduate school. Believing that my academic training was my security, I was not willing to do this. This was not the sort of argument that was likely to be listened to with sympathy in the movement—at least not from someone who was white and middle class. I also felt that the movement was my security, and that it was being destroyed, gratu-

itously, by people who might well lose interest in it within a few years.

Women's liberation had emerged a few years earlier and was gaining momentum; by 1969 male authoritarianism in the anti-war movement was driving large numbers of women into the women's movement. By this time the sexual revolution was in full swing, especially in movement circles; for women it often seemed to mean increased vulnerability to unaccountable men. For some women, the women's movement meant being able to participate in anti-war demonstrations with groups of women, and making decisions in that context about what felt safe and what did not. For many of us it meant a kind of collective intervention in the sexual revolution, an attempt to prevent it from being entirely male-defined, an effort to raise the issue of gender equality in the swirling chaos that seemed to surround us. It also meant suspicion of abstract principles (so often used by men to legitimize their power), a return to personal experience and perceptions as a legitimate basis for political analysis.

My response to the women's movement was a combination of relief that personal issues, especially relations between men and women, were being raised as a legitimate topic of discussion in the movement, disappointment that the way in which these issues were framed often did not speak to my experience, and a fear that all this was leading toward a split in the movement along lines of sex. The feminist analysis of the late sixties, at least within the circles that I was part of, seemed to revolve around a protest against men's reduction of women to sex objects, and the subordination of women within the nuclear family. I had rarely if ever had the experience of being treated as a sex object: men who wanted such relationships were not likely to be attracted to me. I had never experienced or even witnessed firsthand anything that easily fit the category of female subordination within the nuclear family. My father had certainly had a great deal of power over my mother and me, but it could not be blamed on the nuclear family, or at least not directly. In fact my experience, with my father and in my own relationships with men, was that men exercised power not by directly ordering women around, or by paying the bills and making women economically dependent, but by assuming a stance of emotional distance, keeping one foot out the door, sometimes in a bid for greater power, sometimes just out of fear of being trapped in a relationship.

It seemed to me that the issue was not just the fact that men had more social power than women, but also that they were afraid of women and/or intimacy, and that it was the combination of the two that produced the stalemate between men and women—at least in my life. My analysis was certainly compatible with a feminist analysis; over the years a great deal of feminist writing has appeared on men's fear of women and of intimacy. But at the time, it seemed difficult to say these things. There was pressure to adopt the stance that one was tired of being ordered around by men, and was not very interested in relationships with them. On the level of politics, though I shared the criticisms of the anti-war movement that led many women to leave it, I was dismayed to see the movement fragmenting along lines of gender. I did not want to be forced to choose between the two sides. I wanted to continue to be part of a movement that included men and women. I also wanted the movement itself to continue to exist, and I believed that it was being weakened by the trend toward separatism. I sometimes thought that the people pushing for the most militant and separatist positions—in the women's movement and elsewhere on the left—probably in the end did not place much value on the movement. Often they had the option of returning to comfortable middle class lives. It seemed that for many people involvement in the movement was a youthful fling; they were not very concerned about the possibility that their dramatic gestures might contribute to its demise.

I think that what I brought to the movement, as a would-be, or self-made, red diaper baby, was a deep desire to build and sustain a movement for social change. When I became part of the left I assumed that I was doing so for life. I did not like to think about what my life would be like if there were no left, and I did not want to see it go up in smoke. There were good and bad sides to this perspective. On the one hand it made me very cautious, perhaps at times too cautious. I had relatively little sympathy with the rage that seemed to dominate movement politics in the late sixties, and my lack of sympathy undermined my ability to convince people to turn away from a self-destructive politics and take directions that might have been more productive. The fact that the movement collapsed, in the mid-seventies, was not entirely our fault. By the late sixties it was opposition to the war in Vietnam that held the movement together and created a large audience receptive to radicalism. When the war ended the movement came unglued and the large numbers of people who had constituted its left/liberal periphery lost interest in radical politics.

There was probably no way, after the war ended, that a movement for social change could have remained as large as it had been. But it did not have to dwindle to almost nothing—and that is where the mistakes of the left itself made a difference. If there had been more people concerned with sustaining the left, we might not have lost as much as we did.

NOTES

[1] In 1921, a protege of John Dewey, Elisabeth Irwin, had founded an independent school called The Little Red School House. In 1941, the school created a High School and named it after its founder.

[2] The American Labor Party had lost its ballot status in 1954. When the gubernatorial election of 1958 came around, people around the *National Guardian* began trying to put together a coalition of left-wingers to run a state-wide slate of explicitly socialist candidates. This coalition actually included the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party and featured John T. MacManus the editor of the *Guardian* as the gubernatorial candidate. This campaign attracted very little support and the

Independent Socialist Party fell apart right after the election.

[3] Dr. Annette Rubinstein has had a long and distinguished career as a writer and activist. She is on the board of the New York Marxist School and of two journals, *Monthly Review* and *Science and Society.*

[4] t Alliance actually was founded in 1959, just as I was joining that study group. For the place of YSA in American Trotskyism see "American Trotskyism" and "Socialist Workers Party" *Encyclopedia of the American Left.*

[5] Thomas Dodd, the father of the current Senator Dodd from Connecticut, known for his right wing views.

[6] Herbert Aptheker is an historian and Communist Party theoretician. His doctoral dissertation at Columbia University was published as *Negro Slave Revolts* in 1943. He wrote prolifically on numerous topics, though he once remarked that he had never been reviewed in the New York Times Book Review section. In 1965 he led the first visit of American leftists to North Vietnam while U.S. bombs were raining down on that country. Reaching out to the non-Communist left, he invited Staughton Lynd, a Yale History Professor who had spoken strongly against the war at a major anti-war rally in April of that year. Lynd in turn, invited Tom Hayden, one of the founders of SDS (Todd Gitlin states that Aptheker first approached SDS but was rebuffed — see Gitlin: 266n). Aptheker published his account of that trip in *Mission to Hanoi* (NY: International Publishers, 1965) while Hayden and Lynd collaborated on *The Other Side* (NY: New American Library, 1966). Aptheker was W.E.B. DuBois' literary executor, and in that capacity published a bibliography of DuBois' published work, an edited correspondence in three volumes and a complete (40 volume) works as well. In 1993, despite his "communist" background, University of Masschusetts alumnus and benefactor, Bill Cosby, publicly honored Herbert Aptheker for his lifetime struggle against racism. See Aptheker, Herbert *Encyclopedia of the Amercan Left.*

[7] Left or socialist Zionism emerged in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, alongside the Zionist movement and the Jewish socialist movement. The first Zionist congress was held in 1897 (in Basle, Switzerland); at the second congress, held a year later, there was a small socialist contingent, led by Nachman Syrkin. Syrkin was in favor of a socialist Jewish state. He identified with the socialist perspective that was widespread in the Jewish labor movement, and also among poor Jews in Eastern Europe, but he did not believe that a socialist revolution itself would solve the problem of anti-Semitism. Ber Borochov, a Russian Jew and a Marxist, provided a theoretical framework for socialist Zionism; he argued that the anomalous position of Jews in Eastern Europe -excluded both from industry and from agriculture—precluded any future for them there; only in a Jewish state, he argued, could Jews become peasants and workers in large numbers. Left Zionism appealed to Jews, particularly young Jews, who supported socialism but suspected that anti-Semitism would survive a socialist revolution. In Eastern Europe, where large numbers of Jews were attracted to socialism, the *Bund* was the main socialist organization; but early in the twentieth century, as growing numbers of idealistic young Jews emigrated to Palestine, socialist or labor Zionist parties appeared there. *Poale Zion* (Workers of Zion) and *HaPoel HaTzair* (The Young Worker) were both organized in 1905; both functioned as political parties in Palestine; *Poale Zion* was also an international organiation, affiliated with the Second International, which recruited in Russia, mostly among young people.

HaShomer HaTzair (the Young Watchman) was formed in Galicia [Austria] during World War One, mostly among educated young Jews from relatively well-off families, influenced by a strain of socialism that combined Marxism with a romantic vision of collective agrarian communities in Palestine. Collective agricultural settlements (the first, small ones called kvutzot, the later, larger ones, *kibbutzim*) already existed in Palestine, formed mostly by Jewish immigrants with socialist leanings. From 1919 on groups of HaShomer members arrived in Palestine and formed *kibbutzim* that were radically collectivist in their child-rearing policies and in their emphasis on the primacy of the community.

HaShomer, along with other, smaller, socialist Zionist youth movements, recruited young Jews in Europe and elsewhere, who were encouraged to emigrate to Israel after being trained for *kibbutz* life. At the beginning of World War Two there were about 70,000 members of *HaShomer* around the world. During the war, members of *HaShomer*, along with members of other left Zionist youth groups, played a key role in organizing resistance to Nazism. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was led by a coalition of Jewish youth groups, most of them left Zionists; *HaShomer* members played a central role

(Mordecai Anielewitz, the commander of the Jewish Fighting Organization that orchestrated the rebellion, was a leader of *HaShomer*). Most of the few members of *HaShomer* and other left Zionist groups who survived the war went to Israel and joined, or formed, *kibbutzim.*

For discussions of this history, see Nora Levin, While *Messiah Tarried: Jewish Socialist Movement, 1871-1917* (New York: Schocken, 1977), especially Part IV, "Socialist Zionism," and Walter Laquer, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken, 1989), especially chapter six, "Building a NewSociety: The Progress of Left-Wing Zionism."

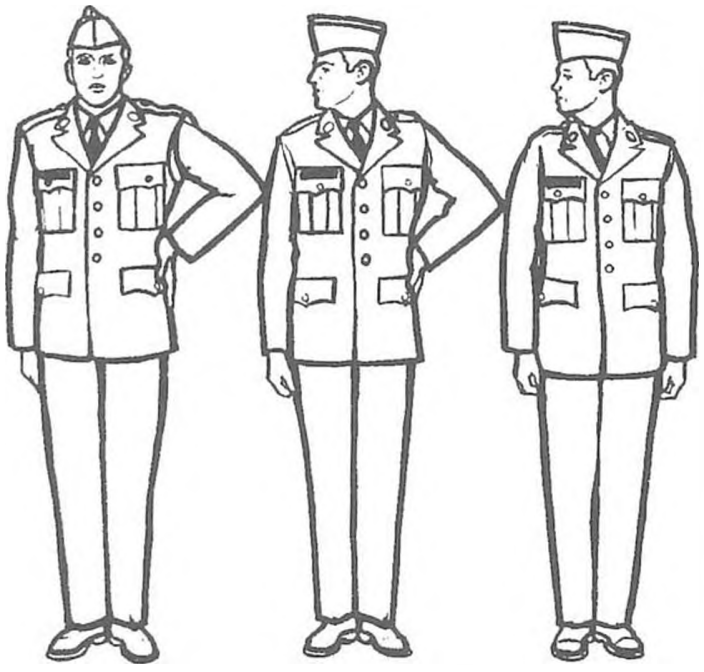
[8] On Tocsin, see Gitlin: 87-101.

[9] Some have even resorted to blaming me for the extremely unpleasant reactionary slant of the New Republic under Peretz since he took it over in the 1970s. I unequivocally plead not guilty —Peretz was an anti-communist extremist long before I left him in the rain. And it really was a mistake!

[10] For Tocsin, see Gitlin: 87-101.

[11] The "beloved community" grew out of the practice of the early Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in the South. See Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle:*

SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981). See also Meta Mendel-Reyes *Reclaiming Democracy: The Sixties in Politics and Memory* (NY: Routledge, 1995) At the founding convention of SNCC, the Revered James Lawson referred to the organization as a "redemptive community" [Carson: 23]. James Foreman, an early organizer of SNCC described it as "A band of brothers [sic] standing in a circle of love" [qtd. in Gitlin: 107]. This idea of a "beloved community" was emphasized and re-emphasized over and over again in the early years of SDS as well. To describe it coldly and analytically, one might say that it required a sense of sharing and friendship and openness and commitment to one's "brothers and sisters" in the struggle. People were together not just because they happened to be on the same side in an important struggle but because they drew sustenance from each other, they trusted, liked, even loved each other. They became family. Obviously, this was only possible in small groups that could really get to know each other.



Close Interval.

How Did an 'Old Left' Background Guide One Individual's 'take' on the Explosion of New Left Activity after 1966?

Paper presented at the conference on the Sixties sponsored by Vietnam Generation, Inc. Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, CT, Nov. 5, 1994.

Michael Meeropol,[1] Western New England College, and Center for Popular Economics.

Old Left Childhood

Despite the fact that I experienced the horrors of 1950s repression as few others in this country did, I think my life as a child with an Old Left upbringing, which I will define as encompassing Communist/Fellow Traveler politics, was actually rather ordinary. As I made friends with like-minded high school-age contemporaries at summer camps, folk music events, integration picket lines, ban the bomb rallies, and especially in Elisabeth Irwin High School[2] I discovered a commonality of attitudes and ideas about which I will attempt to make some generalizations.

We supported the entire left-wing of the Democratic Party agenda: the New Deal plus. We supported unions. We supported equal rights for African Americans, which in those days translated into support for integration. The first political activity I engaged in (aside from the effort to save my parents in 1953)[3] in Washington was the 1958 Youth March for Integrated Schools. I was a high school junior and went to Washington on the bus trip organized by Allen Young, already a freshman at Columbia University.

In the arena of foreign policy, we supported peaceful coexistence. We were enthusiastic early supporters of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy. So far there was nothing in this that many liberals could not support. However, what set us apart from everyone else, was the fact that we thought the Soviet Union was somehow "better" than the United States. It was unclear to us how it was better. The idea of socialism was certainly appealing but I doubt any of us really understood how socialism would be different from capitalism. We knew about a planned economy, we didn't know how it worked. We knew about guarantees for certain basics like health care and education but had no knowledge of whether and in what quality such promises were actually delivered to Soviet citizens.

There was also a long string of "facts" about recent history that I found I and my contemporaries could agree upon: 1) The fact that we knew the United States and Britain had conspired against the Soviet Union and virtually supported Hitler up to the very outbreak of World War II. [the Nazi-Soviet pact was dismissed as a desperation measure forced on the Soviets by the pro-Hitler activities of the west, particularly at Munich][4] 2) The fact that the United States and Britain had "be-

trayed" Republican Spain.[5] 3) The fact that the US was always being unreasonable in discussing disarmament and arms control with the Soviet Union.[6] All of these "facts" were really crucial for me. The first political book I read in the Meeropol home was called *The Great Conspiracy: The Secret War Against Soviet Russia* in which I learned about the intervention by the US and others against the Soviet Union after the 1917 Revolution. I was 10 at the time and was struck by the injustice of that story. Injustice and dishonesty were the chief elements of my complaints about society as I began to become aware in my pre-teen and early teenage years.

One thing I and all other red diaper babies shared which others of my generation did not was we had *no illusions* about the honesty of government leaders. Though I knew none of the details, I knew my parents had been "framed". From Anne and Abel Meeropol I learned about Sacco and Vanzetti, about the various victims of the labor struggles of history (*Labor's Untold Story*[7] was an important early book for me as was Leo Huberman's *We the People*[8]. In terms of the books in my home and the instincts to disbelieve the "establishment" (though we didn't use those words) I and my brother were no different from all the other red diaper babies I've ever met.

Elisabeth Irwin High School

Granted these instincts, how did my high school and undergraduate education alter or flesh them out? I was lucky. I went to Elisabeth Irwin High School in NYC. In 1954, I went there with my parents to see a student production of the play *Finian's Rainbow* and fell in love with the school. I told my parents I wanted to go to high school there. Unbeknownst to me, they had actually asked that Robert and I be enrolled[9] but the school felt that right after the incredible publicity that surrounded the custody battle over us, such an enrollment would run counter to the effort to create extra privacy for us. Thus, I went to a two-year accelerated public junior high school program and Robert went to a neighborhood school for second and third grade.

Looking back this was a wonderful thing. First of all, I finished up sixth grade in a 90 per cent black elementary school. Until then, I had interacted with very few African Americans and therefore didn't know with the certainty of experience that there were all different kinds of people in every possible group. My next two years in public junior high also taught me the value of keeping my mouth shut. I had a social studies teacher for two years who never did any teaching but did a great deal of preaching — about God, Catholicism, anti-communism, how one should behave in school, etc. etc. She was actually very nice to me but her regular pontificating caused me to recognize the value of keeping one's politics secret. I even once volunteered in class that one wasn't a good American if one didn't believe in God. (Mind you, this was while I thought I was an atheist!)

While I was in junior high school, the *New York Daily News* ran a series of articles on the death house at Sing Sing prison. The last installment of the series was about my parents, and that morning my mother told me that there was a picture in the paper of Robby and me visiting our parents in prison. I went to school quite concerned about the reactions of my classmates. I denied that I was the kid in the picture, once again feeling miserable about it as I had previously in New Jersey.[10] From the time I moved in with Anne and Abel Meeropol until 1973 when I finally came out in public as "the son of the Rosenbergs" I felt the need to guard that secret. This was something that, obviously, made Robert and me different from other red-diaper babies but there was an element of commonality. There were certain things about us and our families (usually it was beliefs, publications read, memberships, etc.) that could be dangerous if too many strangers knew them.[11]

Elisabeth Irwin High School did admit us when I entered my freshman year. Robert went to the fourth grade. Immediately, I felt free. For some reason, the parent group running E.I. and the staff of the school did more than resist the red-baiters. There were actual communists and/or fellow travelers on the staff (though I never knew who was and who wasn't, in fact, I never even thought about it). I could read Howard Fast and Albert Maltz stories and write book reports on them. My ninth-grade teacher described how as a master sergeant in the Army he had forced his entire company to stand at attention in the broiling sun while he delivered an hour long lecture on racism because one or two soldiers had made racist remarks at a post canteen. In 1956, as the presidential election approached, he taught up about political manipulation in politics and had us report on political speeches and written propaganda looking for the use of these techniques in that year's campaign. (Just learning a neutral definition of the word propaganda demystified it. Before then, the word propaganda was part of the anti-Communist lexicon. It was something dirty that the Soviets did. I remember a joke told by a public school classmate about a mutual friend whose last name was Pravda. "It means truth in Russian but it really means propaganda to us!") We visited unions (International Ladies Garment Workers Union, District 65) as well as the National Association of Manufacturers.

For the rest of my high school career I seized on everything I studied to reinforce my already existing instincts. As I wrote in *We Are Your Sons*:

> I wrote my ninth grade paper on the Industrial Workers of the World ... We learned "revisionist" analyses of the origins of the Cold War before they had been adopted into the college curricula and then contrasted them with the textbook's repetitions of the old myths ...I read Marx and Lenin, and Jellinek on the Paris Commune for a history report. In my senior year I did a special report on "The Sociological Significance of Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*," for which I read books by Soviet critics.[12]

By the time I graduated from high school, I was a pro-communist, pro-Soviet, pro-peace, pro-union, pro-integration person —rejoicing in the Soviet space achievements, hoping the newly installed revolutionary regime in Cuba would really try to change things. The 1956 Soviet intervention in Hungary had been a disappoint-

ment to say the least. The Speech where Khrushchev acknowledged Stalin's crimes had been a shocking surprise (especially since I had read about the various trials in the Soviet Union in *The Great Conspiracy* ... in which the guilt of Stalin's victims was baldly asserted).[13] I was pleased, however, that Khrushchev had admitted what Stalin did — the United States had never admitted anything such as the frame-ups of Sacco and Vanzetti and my parents. All in all, however, these events had not changed my political and/or intellectual instincts.

I think another thing that I imbibed as part of my Old Left upbringing was an incredible optimism about the "inexorable march" of human progress. When a cynical high school classmate waxed eloquent about the depths of depradations to which humans succumbed—predicting that humanity would blow itself up with atomic war, my father (Abel) responded with great feeling with a homely example: "The used to hang pick pockets in England. Now they don't do that anymore. That's progress!" Thus, I and a lot of my high school friends were extremely excited by the section of John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* where Adam Trask's Chinese house-keeper, Lee, explores the original meaning of God's statement to Cain in Genesis 4.7.

> The American Standard translation orders men to triumph over sin, ... The King James translation makes a promise in 'Thou shalt' meaning that men will surely triumph over sin. But the Hebrew word, the word *timshel* —'Thou mayest'—that gives a choice ... that makes a man great, that gives him stature with the gods, for in his weakness and his filth and his murder of his brother he has still the great choice. He can choose his course and fight it through and win.[14]

To clear up the differences in the two English versions, Lee had submitted the question to his family's elders in San Francisco and these Chinese scholars had learned Hebrew to find the true meaning of the verb form *timshel*. (In the movie, East of Eden, Adam Trask comes across as a moralistic pedant always preaching at his sons, "Man has a choice." No group of Chinese learning Hebrew in Hollywood!) My friends and I used to greet each other with that word for that entire year. I even wrote an article for the student newspaper in which I predicted that the new decade would be "our decade" and mentioned the hope that humanity had always had, symbolized by the word "timshel" way back at the dawn of time.[15]

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE, 1960-1964

College was very different.

First of all, I met and had to argue with well-read intelligent anti-communists. The facts about the undemocratic nature of the Soviet Union that could be "explained away" as "mistakes" in Communist and fellow-traveling households could not be ignored. The complicated nature of historical events could not fit neatly into my high school level "vulgar Marxism" (the "economic interpretation of history"). In my first economics course, I discovered mainstream economics and had no real answers to it. Even a brief beginning effort to engage in a Marxist study group at Swarthmore, attempting to read Marx's *Capital*[16] and Paul Sweezy's *The Theory of Capitalist Development*[17] did not give me any clues to understanding how to refute the obvious apologetics for capitalism embedded in mainstream economics—particularly the economics of the pricing of factors of production.

I apologize for the digression but I think it's an important one. (Skip to the end of the third paragraph if you don't want to follow me on this side trip!) Traditional economic theory begins (in the very first week of learning the subject) by teaching that all production of goods and services is done by so-called factors of production, land, labor, capital (and sometimes they add a fourth, entrepreneurship). Some people own land and they all "own" their own labor. Capital is defined here not as money but as produced means of further production. It is also owned. People buy it by saving up part of their income. Entrepreneurship involves some kind of skill or opportunity to engage in leadership.

These factors of production are sold in competitive markets and the resulting price is an "earned" income—earned at the value set on that particular factor of production by an impersonal market. Landlords "earn" a competitive rent (though here economic theory did admit that some rents and some percentage of other rents were actually higher than necessary returns to scarcity not payments for anything). Workers earned wages, entrepreneurs "earned" profits, and capitalists who lent money "earned" interest. Thus, the idea that profit is stolen from the workers (my simple idea of exploitation) is nonsense if (and admittedly even in mainstream economics it was a big "if") the price of entrepreneurship and capital is set competitively.

While at Swarthmore, a number of my friends wrote their introductory economics paper about the Labor Theory of Value attempting to argue that interest and profit were not "earned" as a result of a contribution to production. I was much too daunted by that task and, in fact, never developed a good rationale for understanding that crucial element of Marxian economics until I was a graduate student at Cambridge University in Great Britain. Thus, my career as a student of economics was completely cut off from my gut instincts. I satisfied myself by emphasizing the instability of capitalism as explained by the Keynesian economic tradition and was attracted to the so-called "stagnation thesis" developed first by the American Keynesian, Alvin Hansen.[18] This prepared me to accept the work of Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy when it finally was published in 1966 (*Monopoly Capital*). My intellectual development as an economist finally was able to fuse with my political instincts as a result of readings I engaged in at Cambridge as well as the opportunity to interact with students of economics who were already much further developed than I was. Being supervised by Joan Robinson and Bob Rowthorn and interacting with people like Maurice Dobb, Steven C. Rankin, D. Mario Nuti and Michael Moohr was also extremely exciting and in the end decisive.[19]

The point of this long digression is to emphasize that my career at Swarthmore profoundly challenged my political instincts and in a number of ways it forced me to modify a great deal. Perhaps the most important thing it taught me is that, what I believe, no matter how *strongly* I believe it, might be wrong. Certainly, my naive views of the Soviet Union had been proven wrong—even in small things like the Soviet resumption of nuclear testing in 1962 as well as in big things like the true nature of Stalinism. Also, in my history courses as well as in my economics courses I realized that the "vulgar Marxism" that I had brought from my parents home and my high school career just couldn't stand up to strong scrutiny. The attempt to make all history look like a sequence of crudely economic interpretations began to appear silly after a full seminar in American history. Just at that moment, I read William A. Williams' *The Contours of American History*[20] for the first time and, though I didn't really understand it yet, I was able to realize that ideas and world views were an important part of policy making and that the narrow economic interests emphasized in, for example, Charles Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*[21] were never the whole story. Looking back, it is clear that the collision of the instincts I had when I arrived at Swarthmore with my experiences in the classroom and in discussions about issues led me to what Allen Young has made one of the themes of his presentation, "learning to think for myself."

The "Radical Community" at Swarthmore

When I arrived at Swarthmore it was the fall of 1960. The sit-ins had begun the previous February and the campus was beginning to stir with political action. Four people, known already as "the four" who had been freshmen during that year were already identified as "the left" at Swarthmore, the "Marxist" left. At least three of them came from Old Left backgrounds and they had been quite vocal and up-front about their politics.[22] I had met one of them at a pre-school reception in September and discovered our "shared politics." Thus, I immediately fell in with a group of like-minded friends.

In my class, a guy with whom I became quite friendly was from a similar Old Left background. He was Carl Wittman, later to become an important leader on campus, in SDS and finally an important figure in the Gay Liberation Movement. In 1964 Carl co-authored "An Interracial Movement of the Poor?"[23] with Tom Hayden and later still "A Gay Manifesto" which was published in *Liberation*. (Carl died of AIDS in 1986 — his patch on the Names Quilt identifies him simply as "dancer" because of his life-long interest in teaching and collecting English country dances). Carl was another red diaper baby whose parents passed on some crucial values but had personally submerged themselves in a-political suburbia. When Carl went home during the first vacation of his freshman year, he angrily confronted his parents for not "doing anything" while all the horrible things were perpetrated against black people and against world peace in the 1950s. Their answer was, they looked at Carl and his older sister running around the house in 1953 and then thought of what happened to my parents (Carl didn't know my identity at that point) and consciously pulled in their horns.

I, Carl, "the four" and others began to hang out together, sing songs, discuss politics, art, you name it. Sometime either in the second semester of my freshman year or the first semester of my sophomore year, two members of "the four" were informed by the Dean of Men that there had been faculty complaints about the "communism" of some freshmen. We immediately decided that this meant me and Carl. Even as a freshman, Carl had tremendous ability to figure out how to get his points across in classroom discussions. I guess some faculty saw him as "too successful" in pushing a "line." In thinking about where I would have betrayed a "dangerous ideology" I could only imagine it was my introductory philosophy course where I had written a supportive paper about dialectical materialism. Nothing else ever came of this, and two years later when Carl was the focus of tremendous antagonism for his leftist opinions and actions, efforts within the college administration to consider sanctions against Carl were met with resolute civil liberties opposition among the faculty.[24] However, the fact that even one professor thought me dogmatic enough to express his concerns to the administration gave me great pause. It was part of the process of forcing me to really examine *why* I believed what I believed.

A very serious event occurred for me when the United States instigated the Bay of Pigs invasion. Our group was firmly pro-Cuba.[25] A number of people from campus had gone to Cuba to "see for themselves" over the previous Christmas vacation and had come back with extremely positive reports about the revolution. One of "the four" fashioned a slide show which he showed not only on campus but before community groups in an effort to support the thrust of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (namely that the Cubans should be left alone by the U.S.). When word got out about training Cuban exiles, Carl researched our neutrality laws and discovered, surprise surprise, that the U.S. was breaking its own laws. With that result, Carl was able to convince the student newspaper to publish an extremely strong editorial condemning "Aid to Counter-Revolutionaries." The week before the Bay of Pigs invasion, we sent lots of telegrams to Washington urging Kennedy to "call off the CIA." Then the Bay of Pigs happened. A tiny group of Swarthmore students went to a demonstration in downtown Philadelphia.

The crowd was extremely hostile, ripping signs out of people's hands and provoking a couple of fights. That ended up causing the arrest of a number of the picketers, including a guy who was arrested merely for writing a cop's number down. Later we found out that the two men who had been ripping signs and provoking the fight were plainclothes cops. The experience of the hostility of the crowd and the role of the police in the confrontation was very important for me. It is true I believe one can learn from books, and I had read plenty about police brutality especially in my books about labor history. Nevertheless, there is nothing like a personal experience to solidify an intellectual belief. The mendacity of the press was very

important to me, as it completely ignored the facts that two plainclothes police had started the fight and that one person had been arrested for writing down a cop's badge number. That night, I and another freshman got into a shouting match with a pro-government student over the incident. The next day he saw a couple of cops in the hallway and made an off-hand remark, "Wouldn't it be great if the police were here to arrest S—— and Meeropol?" Someone misunderstood that statement and called me saying the cops *were* here to arrest me and the other fellow.

By this time a number of my close friends knew who I was and they (and I) panicked about possible "exposure." By the time I had visited with a local lawyer, the mix-up had been cleared up, but that visceral reaction reminded me that I had fears of what might happen if my secret were known to strangers. With 20-20 hindsight such fears appear foolish, especially once I became open about my politics both at Swarthmore and later. They also appear foolish because most people I meet today who knew me then tell me *everybody* knew who I was! The point of this story is that all red diaper babies experienced "fear of exposure" in a variety of guises. Being a hated minority in danger from citizens in general as well as the police who were supposed to neutrally protect our Constitutional rights was connected to this fear. This experience reinforced a lot of my intellectually arrived at gut feelings from my red diaper baby past.

The Bay of Pigs also solidified one other belief. Though I hadn't read Lenin's *Imperialism* I "knew" that the United States was an imperialist nation.[26] The Bay of Pigs proved it. The previous year's overthrow of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo was another example, though here the United States did not have its hands as dirty as in Cuba.[27] I didn't have the intellectual understanding to argue that imperialism was inherent in American capitalism, but I could see right before my eyes that American Imperialism was alive and well and dangerous. This was brought home even more strongly to me during the Cuban Missile Crisis the next fall. Unlike some people at Swarthmore, I chose not to go to Washington to demonstrate. I was actually paralyzed with the prospect that in a few days, we would all go up in a puff of nuclear vapor. While some at Swarthmore wrote up arguments against Kennedy's blockade, and posted them on the bulletin board (Carl and one of "the four"), I just hoped against hope that reason would prevail. My red diaper baby background took over in the "blame game" and from that moment on, I hated John F. Kennedy. I remember actually taking it personally, commenting to all who would listen over the next year (until the assasination made such comments appear churlish and I began to keep them to myself) that Kennedy "almost killed me."

With 20-20 hindsight, by the way, I wasn't far from wrong. If Khrushchev had not backed down (and his country had a perfect legal right to put missiles in a sovereign nation, no matter how close to the United States that nation was), the invasion force to take out the missiles (and Castro) was *on its way* and the Soviet commanders on the ground had carte blanche to use tactical nuclear missiles to repel the invasion force *without having to wait for orders from Moscow.*[28] The world came "that close" to World War III; I have never stopped praising Khrushchev for backing down like that. It cost him his job; it gave the Soviet Union a rationale for a ridiculously expensive and ultimately self-destructive nuclear weapons build-up; but it saved my life!

From the Old Left into the New

At Cambridge University, I became an "intellectual Marxist." I satisfied myself that the Marxist approach to understanding economics and economic experience was more right than wrong. I believe I came to understand Marxist economics and began to develop my personal critique of the mainstream economics I had learned at Swarthmore. (I might add that this critique has been developed over and over again as I have been forced to *teach* mainstream economics to college students for the past 23 years!) I also was very vocal about my politics, both privately and publicly. I joined the "Marxist Society" which was run by British Communists and ended up performing Bob Dylan's apocalyptic "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall"[29] for the musical-poetry review they put together. When I went home on vacation in April of 1965, I attended the SDS march against the war in Vietnam, thrilling to the uncompromising rhetoric of Staughton Lynd and even Senator Ernest Gruening.[30] I wrote an article about the trip for the Labor Party magazine at Cambridge University. By the time I returned to the U.S. in June of 1966, I felt I had integrated my "gut instincts" with my intellectual development.

Annie and I (we had gotten married in December) returned to the states on a student boat. Interestingly, the man who conducted the programs on the ship, Erich Hoffmann, turned out to be the Peace Corps director in Ecuador who played such an important role in Paul Cowan's *The Making of an Un-American.*[31] In two of the discussions (one on Vietnam, one on Germany and the German question) I was one of the panelists who had to make reasoned presentations to an audience who was not necessarily supportive. I was quite open about my positions, and then, perhaps coincidentally, I received a very detailed scrutiny by U.S. Customs. The customs inspector took Annie's and my passports away for a while (I surmise it was to check whether we were indeed the people who were supposed to get that special treatment). Then they went through a lot of my material, including trying to find the publisher of my copy of Paul Robeson's *Here I Stand* which I had bought in Britain. The inspector told us, "You shouldn't have gone to Czechoslovakia, I don't know ...maybe we're mad at the Slovaks this week, next week it'll be someone else." I didn't think of it then, but I had played a few songs on Czech radio in the summer of 1965. Maybe some monitor had picked it up and put me on some list. My personal FBI file goes back as far as 1964 so maybe I had already been on a list.

By the time I left Cambridge, I knew I wanted to go to graduate school in economic history and become a college professor while spending as much time as I possibly could working to change America. My disillusion with the Soviet Union made the idea of working with

and/or joining the American Communist Party disappear. I began to develop the idea that the CP was a "conservative" organization. Though my good friend from Swarthmore, Jerry Gelles was in PL and I actually subscribed to the organization's magazine, I was turned off by what seemed their single-mindedness, particularly in support of China. I remember particularly being incensed that the Chinese were actually holding up the overland transport of Soviet supplies for the Vietnamese—and when I argued with Jerry in a letter, he answered in such a convoluted way that I decided PL was too tied to its pro-Chinese view to be taken too seriously.

That left me with SDS. Carl had attended a national conference meeting in 1963 and had returned to Swarthmore for our senior year recommending that the local radical group affiliate with SDS. I became an at-large member from that point on. I really thought SDS was the wave of the future. It was decentralized. Each group democratically decided what to do. The National Office was a disseminator of ideas, a catalyst. I remained a paid-up member-at-large and read *New Left Notes* assiduously for the four years from 1966 till 1970 when Weatherman went underground.[32] My other sources of "movement news" were the *National Guardian* (which became *The Guardian* after 1967), the *Berkeley Barb* (a freewheeling underground paper with as much about sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll as it had about politics. I actually had a sub from Madison, Wis.) and Liberation News Service. Because of my friendship with Allen, I was extremely attracted to LNS, paying for a personal subscription and actually submitting a number of articles directly to them.

When I arrived in Wisconsin in the fall of 1966, I had the advantage that Jerry Markowitz, my closest friend had been in graduate school there for the year before I arrived. Jerry and his wife, Adrienne, had been good friends of mine since 1962. In fact, Adrienne had introduced me to Annie. Our lives and political activities in Madison are described in the chapter "Neighborhood Politics" in *History and the New Left* a very interesting book about Madison, edited by Paul Buhle.[33] The crucial thing that I want to mention about my reaction to the myriad activities of the New Left as I experienced them in Madison between 1966 and 1970 is that I entered that world wanting to be a "foot soldier." I wanted to be in a group that I could feel comfortable following. I never considered myself a potential leader. I just wanted to do my part. In fact, my entire political life since then has been a search for ways to "do my part." Unfortunately, most of that time that has been of a "free lance" variety. My version of free lancing has been primarily letters to the editors of newspapers, calling talk radio shows. In Madison in 1969 and 70 I called many radio programs and was even invited to be a guest on one as an SDS member [as Michael Meeropol not the son of the Rosenbergs]. I consider the way I've designed my courses to be another example of such efforts.[34] I wonder if there has been much work on how many people with serious radical consciousness actually spend a lot of political energy "free lancing." My involvement with organizations has been minimal, aside from work with the National Committee to Reopen the Rosenberg Case and the Fund for Open Information and Accountablity (between 1974 and 1980), and the Center for Popular Economics in Amherst, Ma. of which I was a full member from 1986 to 1990.

My Attempted "Role" in the Antiwar Movement

If I can summarize why I never threw myself into any of the campus-based organizations at the University of Wisconsin, it was because I always believed that the important thing to do was build a movement that could sustain itself while growing. In an interview I gave for *University Review* in 1973, I put it this way:

> The anti-war movement was never a long-haul movement. It was an organization to plan the next demonstration. What was needed was ongoing counter-information centers such as exist today, [1973] for example, with Indochina Educational Center... These forms that grew up in the period after 1969 represent what was and is best in the anti-war movement. I think the entire New Left never solidly drove home its points. I think a person at a demonstration is only the first step. They must understand the world so that they will stay with the struggle the rest of their lives. For that we need community, ongoing education, and some vision of the future. The anti-war movement should have done more of the ongoing education than it did.[35]

The one activity I did engage in was the creation of the Wisconsin Alliance. I worked with a number of older radicals who lived in the same neighborhood that Annie and I and Jerry and Adrienne did. One of them was Lester Radke, a guy who was regularly red-baited by the local right wing every time there was any anti-war or other political activity on campus. The other was Dick Krooth, an unbelievably tenacious researcher. When I first arrived in Madison in the fall of 1966, I went right to Frank Emspak who at that time was directing the National Coordinating Committee to the End the War in Vietnam. He mentioned that "Dick Krooth is always in the library." Dick ran for alderman in his local ward and later worked with me on the initial pamphlet for the Wisconsin Alliance. Lester was involved both in the anti-war movement on campus and in local electoral politics.

Soon after I arrived in Madison, I prevailed upon Jerry and Steven Rankin (the economist who I had met in Cambridge and who arrived in Madison the year before I did), to join me in submitting a piece to *New Left Notes* arguing for a decentralized Third Party Presidential campaign in 1968. That November, I travelled to Cleveland for the conference of the National Coordinating Committee. At that conference, I attempted to get the assembled group to adopt our idea. A few people referred to it in their speeches, most notably Paul Booth of SDS a former classmate at Swarthmore, but mostly it was ignored. Instead, the major focus was on whether or not to sponsor massive anti-war marches in New York City and San Francisco the next April. This marked my first and last attempt in a national setting to put into practice the

vision that I was referring to in the quote from *University Review*. Representing no one but myself (as an SDS member at large), I moved to strike the idea of having two big national demonstrations in favor of local demonstrations, coordinated at the same time, so as to build strong and growing local movements. The debate on that issue was unbelievably interesting.

First of all, the National Coordinatng Committee was at that time a fusion of old left and pacifist peace groups from the "older generation" with the hard work of a younger activists, like Frank Emspak thrown in. Thus, Fred Halsted of the Socialist Workers Party and Arnold Johnson of the CPUSA and Sidney Peck of the inter-university committee to end the War in Vietnam, were very strong for this national demonstration, as was well known pacifist A.J. Muste and a person from Women's Strike for Peace whose name escapes me, now. Sid told me directly that my Third Party approach was not necessary. "If the United States is forced to unilaterally withdraw from Vietnam that, in and of itself, will be a profound change in the United States system."

Arrayed against them were (it appeared to me) most of the younger people at the meeting—a number of unaffiliated SDS folks but also people who were still working in the Cleveland area as spin-offs of the ERAP project in which Oli and Charlotte Fein had been very active.[36] At the meeting I met Hugh Fowler who was the head of the DuBois Clubs, a youth organization which was close to if not directly affiliated with the CPUSA. In a naive demonstration that I didn't know a thing about Party Discipline, I passed Hugh a note during the debate urging him to tell the group "what DuBois Clubs think of this national demonstration idea." He stood up and gave a strong well reasoned argument *against* the national demonstrations. So did Frank Emspak, despite widespread belief that he was actually in the CP. In other words, young people politically close to the Communist Party were taking an opposite position from a top CP functionary in a public meeting, populated by many non-party folks. If I were a sectarian it would have made my head spin but instead it just appeared perfectly natural — some people were wedded to national demonstrations as a way of putting pressure on the government. Others were more wedded to long term organizing. I was on the side of long term organizing. I lost that vote and (and here I'm not proud, I'm just reporting) I didn't go to another national demonstration until the counter-bicentennial in 1976.

Electoral Politics

I never could understand the criticism of electoral politics from the left. I remember vividly, the first time I went around my neighborhood with a petition to get the first anti-Vietnam referendum on the ballot in Madison. I ended up in a long, relatively frustrating discussion with a guy who said he was a syndicalist and opposed to electoral politics. Only at the end of the conversation did I learn he was Paul Buhle, the editor of *Radical America* to which I was already a subscriber. This was the beginning of a fine friendship, but Paul remained totally opposed to what I was doing.[37]

Later, in the spring of 1968, a radical group at the University sponsored a panel on electoral politics featuring Frank Emspak, now a major supporter of the group Madison Citizens for a Vote on Vietnam which had placed a referendum question on the ballot, Paul, and a university radical whose name escapes me. The idea of running a campaign for a referendum question was the brainchild of Maurice Zeitlin, a radical sociologist at the university.[38] Paul gave a very reasoned argument against using electoral politics, and I remember during the question period attempting to answer him, as I had attempted to anticipate those kinds of arguments in written submissions to the PL publication *Progressive Labor* (which didn't publish it) and *New Left Notes* (which did publish it—twice!).

The substance of the dispute was whether electoral politics was for too many people a substitute for building a movement which was hunkered down for the long term struggle. Dick Krooth would argue, and I agreed with him, that there was a signficant difference between a "party" and a "ticket." A "ticket" would run a candidate and that was it. There would be some brief educational campaign but no lasting structure. A "party" was supposed to have staying power. It was supposed to have a truly radical program and be involved in getting its message across *all the time* not just during the campaign. Thus, we worked very hard trying to create a viable program on which to organize the Wisconsin Alliance. Because I left Madison in 1970, I do not know the ins and outs of the growth and ultimate decline of the Alliance but I know it attracted even some national publicity in the early 1970s and has been reincarnated recently as the Farmer and Labor Party. Thus, we must have been somewhat correct in arguing that a well developed program for an independent political party could develop the staying power to build a movement for social change, one of whose activities would be running candidates in elections. It is no accident that a "campus radical" Paul Soglin was mayor of Madison for two terms in the 1970s and is currently into a second term after a "comeback" in 1990.

In 1968 the California Peace and Freedom Party got on the ballot and I followed its activities with great interest. Though the party was never were able to really challenge the prevailing two-party system in California, its activity did, in the end, create the circumstances which led to the election of Ron Dellums as a Democrat to the Berkeley-Oakland Congressional Seat. Ron's role in the House and in his district has clearly been extremely positive, as has been the role of many members of the Congressional Black Caucus. But this is all hindsight.

During the spring of 1968, I was so impressed with the Peace and Freedom Party and the Wisconsin Alliance that I actually called Allen Young in the middle of the Columbia Uprising, while he was occupying a building to tell him about my hopes for a national fusion of all the local radical third parties. He was exasperated, "The world is falling down around us. How can you think of a third party?" But that was where I was.

The Issue of Violence

Now, maybe some of this is a style issue. I don't think I ever confronted the cultural aspects of the New Left. I never was even close to being a Yippie. I didn't smoke grass until 1969, for example! I was married and monogamous. I was forced to be an anti-sexist in my marriage by an extremely strong woman who happened to be my wife, but the idea of smashing monogamy and destroying the nuclear family never made any sense to me. I don't say this in self-justification or self-congratulation; I'm merely reporting. One aspect of the "style" issue, however, was the idea of violent confrontations. Every real radical knows that there are some times you have to make really serious sacrifices. As I grew older and began to realize the enormity of the sacrifice my parents had made, I often reminded myself that it was important, "when push comes to shove" to be on the "side of the angels" as the song goes. The problem was always when it was essential to take the stand, and when it was more important to conserve what you have. It was in the context of "conserving" my sanity, that I avoided publicity until 1973. Only once, in 1969, I mentioned on the phone to attorney William Kuntsler who was then representing Morton Sobell, my parents co-defendant, that if he thought there was anything I could do for Morton, I was willing. When Morton was released in 1969, I didn't think about that issue any more, at least not until 1973.

This fear of exposure led me, for example, not to sign the We Won't Go statements, though I supported them. I also did nothing flamboyant in my interaction with the draft. Later I regretted that, because Mark Sobell (Morton's son) had written the draft board a long letter saying, after what the United States did to his father, he would never serve in the armed forces. The draft board got him to take his physical and they found a medical reason not to call him. When I learned about that in 1973 from Marshall Perlin, Mort's long-time attorney and mine as well since 1973, I wished I had thought of that. I know my parents would have discouraged it as they discouraged my changing my name back to Rosenberg, especially while Robert was under 21, and perhaps I wouldn't have gone ahead, but with hindsight in 1973, I wished I'd done it. I did briefly consider the idea of GI organizing. I was very impressed with the story of Andy Stapp and his efforts to create an American Servicemen's Union (the fact that he was in YSA was totally irrelvant to me). I was quite impressed with the GI coffee house movement. One of the movers and shakers in it was Fred Gardner who had gone to my high school and had married a classmate. I wrote to the Veterans for Peace in Vietnam and asked their advice on the feasibility of organizing in the army as a GI as opposed to draft resistance and/or Canada. In the end, I rejected a 2-S deferment in the fall of 1967 and by the time my draft board re-classified me 1-A, my first child was on the way. I really don't know what I would have done if our plan to have our first child had not coincided with that 1-A classification.

Getting back to the violence issue, I always felt that most of the violent confrontations that I became aware of, particularly at Wisconsin, were counter-productive. I do not think that the provoking of police activity, the blocking of recruiters, etc. built the movement; I think it shut the movement off from ordinary people, even ordinary students. This was a very delicate issue. There is no question but that stopping Dow Chemical corporation from recruiting on campus was morally acceptable. Howard Zinn wrote a very reasoned piece for *New Left Notes* called "Dow Shalt Not Kill" showing that one could even find a legal basis for that activity — basically the same argument used by Abbie Hoffman and Amy Carter in the anti-CIA sit-in held in Northampton, Mass. in 1988, the so-called "necessity" defense. (That is, if your illegal action is necessary to prevent a much more deadly illegal action, then your action is justified.) The question was, when you do that, you make yourself morally pure, you even, briefly, harm the government's war machine. But in the long run, do you build support for your movement or do you turn off your potential allies? I always found myself believing that many of the actions that I was personally aware of, even those activities where I participated with support picketing, did more harm than good. I even remember writing a scathing letter to *New Left Notes* when an article was published about an activity at Wisconsin. The article left out all of the negative results for the movement that followed on the activity described. I filled in all the negative things that happened, then ended with a couple of paragraphs berating the National Office staffer who wrote the article. With great pomposity I lectured NLN that if we can't tell the truth to ourselves about what we're doing, how the hell can we expect to get anything accomplished. The editor left those complaining paragraphs out of my letter but did print the corrections of the record.

Part of this, and here maybe I share something with other red diaper babies who grew up with the fear of the 1950s, was a recognition that the government was very serious and quite capable of violence, repression and even murder. I always argued intellectually that if you're going to be in a position to get hurt, it better be for a *very good reason*. However, maybe there was a strong element of fear involved. My brother described being on the fringes of a major confrontation with police in Ann Arbor in 1970:

> I was stunned and unable to act. My past paralyzed me with fear as I watched my friends actually fighting with these trained helmeted, armed men—I ran back and forth in the melee, acting like a chicken with its head cut off. I wound up throwing snowballs with friends on the sidelines but didn't participate in the battle.[39]

I never was in that situation, but imagine I might have reacted in a similar way. I knew, intellectually, that there would be a time and a place where I might, literally, have to risk my income, my freedom, even more, my life. I always hoped, and even still do, that I would be able to identify that time/place should it present itself. However, I remain conflicted about whether or not my decisions in the late 1960s were as intellectually pure as I would have wished or if I was just chicken.

THOUGHTS ON THE "FAILURE" OF THE NEW LEFT

In addition to writing and calling talk radio shows, I made an effort to become a columnist for the student newspaper but that never came through. My column was going to be called "Radicalism is Rational." I got the idea because I saw an letter written by a University of Wisconsin undergraduate to the local newspaper where this student claimed he had never heard or read a single rational argument from SDS, or any other radical group. I wrote him a letter and asked to have lunch with him so I could try and persuade him radicalism could be rational. We had a long lunch, he had a strong case of "great power chauvinism" because as I showed the rationality of the radical arguments against the war in Vietnam, all he could say was, "Well, I guess it depends on whether you want to *let* a country go communist." I did force him to admit that, yes, one could make a rational argument for doing that, but I know I didn't convince him that argument was correct.

Despite my frustration with this particular individual, I felt that I could, with reasoned argument, convince people that radicalism is rational. The most persistent argument against the Left was and still remains that it's irrational. I always felt that if you had respect for the people you were trying to persuade, you would have a much better time showing that you were right. Since the pre-World War I Socialist Party (note this mention indicates my intellectual debt to Paul Buhle and *Radical America*), there has never been a serious commitment on the part of the left to reach out to people with a positive alternative to the capitalism they dislike in their gut. In 1969, the Weatherman group within SDS said honestly, "There's no chance in convincing them, so let's not try."[40] If you believe in socialism and progress, you are giving up before you start if you assume the majority of Americans are unreachable. If we can't convince the American people, then the world is headed for barbarism. The early 20th century Marxist revolutionary (and economist) Rosa Luxembourg said the choice was socialism or barbarism: she didn't say socialism is inevitable.

And yet, despite all this, I was quite ambivalent about Weatherman and the turn towards violence. On some level I cheered on "The New Year's Gang" a Wisconsin group which stole a plane on New Year's Eve in 1970 and tried to drop a bomb on an ammunition dump (the bomb didn't explode).[41] The willingness of the Weathermen (they weren't called the Weather Underground until later) to fight both attracted and repelled me. The attraction was for their bravery. The fact that I was friendly with Eleanor Raskin and Kathy Boudin and had known Cathy Wilkerson at Swarthmore gave an element of personal affection and respect to that attraction.[42] However, I believe that the turn towards violence harmed the movement more than it helped. I think the collapse of the National SDS into faction-fighting and being "Marxier than thou" was an incredible disaster for the ability of the movement to fight back against the repression of 1969-71 and continue influencing the new generation of high school and college students into the 1970s.[43]

When you think about it, the early 1970s saw the end of the economic boom and the beginning of a squeeze on the standard of living of ordinary Americans, a squeeze that has continued to this day. A national organization like SDS, organized exactly the way it was in 1968 could have provided a lot of the intellectual background for an evolving critique of the United States in the 1970s. But faction fighting turned what went on at the national level and in NLN into an irrelevancy for lots of local people just getting connected to the movement. The various radical professional organizations, the still existing underground newspapers, magazines like *Radical America*, *Socialist Revolution* (now *Review*), the abortive *Seven Days*, etc. all attempted to play the role that national SDS had abandoned. The *Guardian* even got involved in supporting the building of a new Marxist-Leninist Party. In this, I agree wholeheartedly with Barbara Epstein that the movement itself is something to conserve, so it can *be there* when the kind of explosion of activity that occurred in 1966-1970 re-occurs. The fact that the most prominent New Left organization chose the period of its most explosive growth to come down with a serious attack of "vanguard-itis" is, in my opinion, a serious historical tragedy.

In saying this, I don't want to minimize the role of the repressive power of the state. But as Gitlin argues, compared to the Palmer Raids or the anti-union activities of the bosses at various times in US history, the repression of the New Left was relatively mild.[44] Many of the overt attempts at repression, the various trials, were great *organizers* because the effort to fight back against them were conducted so well. Throughout the Conspiracy Trial, for example, the defendants would speak to gigantic enthusiastic supportive overflow crowds all over the country.

Thus, I conclude that for this red diaper baby, the correct path for the New Left in the course of the 1960s would have been concentration on base building for the long haul with every action subject to the question, "will this build the movement or not?" I always supported the New Left rejection of the various Marxist-Leninist sects, no matter how willing I was, unlike other New Leftists, to remain in coalition with them—YSA/SWP, CP, PL. On the other hand, I ultimately (despite some ambivalence, in part a nagging fear that I might be operating out of cowardice not conviction) rejected the escalation of resistance into violence.

That's my "testimony."

DISCUSSION:

Question: I have a combination of comments and a question for Barbara. I was a senior in Berkeley in 64-65, two years before you got there. Now I was not CP, I was lefty Democrat moving further left. But I had a similar experience to yours of being ostracized because I spoke out against prevailing sentiments. In this case it wasn't the violence, which at that time was still beyond the pale. It was over the issue of whether one should precipitate the confrontation in order to have a confrontation versus

doing your thing and if the Administration causes a confrontation, so be it. And like you I got ostracized, stigmatized, forever put down, I got exposed to in Spider Magazine as the atrocity of the month, and so on. But one of the other people there was Bettina Aptheker who, while she never said she was CP, everyone assumed she was CP.[45] And Bettina because of that, had kind of a aura, kind of respect that allowed her to say without being stigmatized what I could not say without being stigmatized. She said something similar, I won't say she said it identically, but she said something similar and people listened to her whereas I just got ostracized. And this sounds very different than when you were there. You said the CP was itself a sort of stigma. What happened?

Barbara: No, I didn't mean that being in the Party [created a stigma]. I mean first of all by the time of the story that I told you, that was 1969. I had left the Party in 1968. I was encouraged to give that speech by a member of the Party who happened to agree with me. And I think that my criticism of promoting violence were criticisms that most members of the Party would have shared. But I would say that on the Berkeley campus partly because of the role that the Party (Bettina and others in the Party) had played in the Free Speech Movement, there was a fair amount of respect for the Party. So I actually never felt on the Berkeley campus that I couldn't say that I was a member of the Party. That was not the issue. The issue was that by 1969 an equation had been drawn between militance and violence. And if you spoke out against that you were likely to be ostracized. And I think that is the reason why, even though the Party member who encouraged me to do this agreed with me, he never defended me. Because it was too dangerous to do so.

Allen: I think that there was a great deal of concern in the New Left, especially in the late 60's, about what we'd call the "correct line." But the "correct line" is really an Old Left notion. The line—the Communist Party Line, the Socialist Party Line—those lines were different for all the various issues of the day. And developing a line was very important. I remember I would meet somebody new and my friends would say to me, "Does he (or she) have good politics?" And the answer is either "yes" or "no." And good politics meant they had to have a certain line. I think that that was really a very harmful tendency because I think it inhibited people from thinking for themselves. I feel in a lot of ways it was an extension of the dogmatism of the Old Left into the New Left. The Cuba/gay issue was a really important for me because I was such an admirer of the Cuban revolution. I came out as a gay man and here's this country with a government which I'd been idolizing and I discovered they were engaged in severe repression against gay men and lesbians. And when I studied the roots of this, they go back to Stalin, because the original Bolshevik Revolution didn't have a policy of sexual oppression. But then during the Stalin period the Soviet Union developed a whole line about homosexuality as related to bourgeois decadence and the line was that you couldn't be a good revolutionary and be a homosexual. Homosexuals around the world were expelled from the Communist Party. This revelation in Cuba was the first step for me, the first opening up, and I began to see that this whole insistence on finding an answer for everything and having a correct line for everything was something that just didn't go along with my idea about freedom.

Q: My mother is about 10 years older than all of you, so it was my grandparents—my grandmother was an ILGWU organizer and a Communist and she lived in a bungalow colony on weekends about an hour from here in Peekskill. My mother went to Camp Kinderland and she was an usher at the Paul Robeson concert[46] and so on. But something happened in the 50's that I don't really know about 'cause they never talked to me about it. And I'm about 10 years or 12 years younger than you and so my family completely missed the 60's. You know in 1962 I was born my parents were in their early 30's and being young professionals and all that so I'm just wondering one thing. I don't know if your parents were into this or your grandparents were into this? And I'm just wondering if there is some kind of sort of overlap of having been at the right place at the right time and if you think there is any generational aspect—whether some red-diaper babies reacted by becoming very conservative, and I'm wondering if it had to do with what age you were when certain things occurred.

Michael: My grandparents were all immigrants, all 8 of my grandparents were immigrants, all four of my parents were born in this country.

Q: Right, so in effect *we're* of the same generation.

Barbara: My father was an immigrant, technically. He came over with his father from Russia when he was 3 years old. So technically that makes me a second generation.

Allen: My mother was also a baby also when she came from Europe. I think that the point that you make about generations is a factor. My sister, who is four years younger than I am, not only did not only failed to become active in left wing politics but she never even registered to vote! This just wasn't part of her life and I think part of it had to do with the fact that my parents were less active by that time. By the time of the late 50's, they really stopped functioning as members of the Communist party. Actually they were expelled from the Communist party on rather bogus charges of racism. Fine people were expelled from the Communist party on bogus charges because the Party was so discredited and unable to function, so they started going after each other because that was the easiest thing to do.

Barbara: I think there are two factors. I think it's not just generational. But I think particularly in the 60's precisely what age you were made a big difference. Because the movement changed so fast, that some people felt comfortable with it in the early 60's but not in the mid 60's. When I was in college people were involved in the movement weren't yet dropping out of school but a few

years later people were dropping out of school en masse. So you know these precise differences made the impact. The other thing is that I think real red-diaper babies of which I wasn't one had an enormous range of responses to growing up in Communist families. Some people didn't want to have anything to do with it, some people joined the New Left continued to identify as leftists but were appalled by the Old Left. Some people were proud of growing up in Communist families. So I don't think there is any one pattern.

Michael: Very briefly. In *We Are Your Sons*, my brother got to write the story of the 60's not me. He had an entirely different "take" on those years than I did. He's four years younger than I am and you can read the difference in his section of the book.

Question: To follow up on that issue, you're all Jewish from New York?

Michael: Yes

Question: You didn't talk (in your oral presentation here) about being Jewish any one of you. How significant is that in distinguising within the Old Left? Was your experience representative? How do you feel about the Jewishness? Specifically, some of your experiences, Barbara, in terms of sexism particularly when you went to high school—are they related to ethnic kinds of dynamics?

Barbara: Absolutely

Q: And second to what extent were issues of introspection, interest in psychology, psychanalysis, psychotherapy, something that in my experience were anathema to the Old Left part of what you were coming to grips with in the 60's and after?

Barbara: Well actually, the fact of the matter is that I'm half Jewish. My father is Jewish my mother isn't. I grew up not only wanting to be a Communist but wanting to be a Jew because I looked at the Jewish Communist community and that was what I wanted to be a part of. And so I tried harder to be a Jew than virtually anybody I knew. I learned Hebrew, I learned some Yiddish, I learned Jewish history and so forth. So that is the way it had an impact on me. I also think that in some ways I was right in the sense that I do think that there was much more room for women to be activists, intellectuals, equals, etc. in the Jewish left world in New York than there was in the largely non-Jewish world that I entered once I went to college. And it simply was my experience that mostly the Old Left was Jewish. I was interested in psychology from the very beginning, so to the extent that the Old Left was nervous about it I just ignored that.

Michael: And not only was the Old Left Jewish, but the United States ended at the Hudson River.

Barbara: Right

Allen: I think it's important to point out that although there were many Jews in the Old Left, the Old Left did not project itself as being Jewish. The leadership of the Communist Party including the editor and the major writers in the left wing newspapers, were mostly Gentiles, or Jews who used Gentile-sounding names. In fact, I had a cousin named Ira Wallach who used to write a column for the Daily Worker under the name of Ted Tinsley. The New Left also had an interesting mix of Jews and Gentiles. I think people usually knew who was Jewish and who wasn't. But I think among the New Left Jews, there wasn't a strong emphasis on Jewish culture, so that it didn't really matter all that much. I found it didn't matter much to me. I tended toward being an atheist but always was quick to identify myself as Jewish—except there was a very brief period of time in my life when, if I were asked to to fill out a form that asked for a "religion," I would put "none." But for most of my life I have identified Jewish, seeing it as heritage or ethnicity, not as religion.

Michael: I don't want that humorous quip to be my only answer to this question. I have always considered myself ethnically Jewish even though I have not practiced Judaism as an adult. My last religious act in Synagogue was at the age of seventeen when I said a prayer at my brother's Bar Mitzvah. My previous religious act in Synagogue was at my own Bar Mitzvah. When I was young, both when living with my original parents, and during the time they were in prison, I was exposed to Jewish culture, attending a *Folkshul* in New Jersey where I learned the Yiddish alphabet, and a number of important Yiddish-language sons, especially the fighting song of the Warsaw Ghetto, "*Zog Nit Keynmol*," a song of such power, reverence and respect that I still can't help standing whenever I sing it. From the time I was able to sort out my understanding of what it means to be a Jew, I have always insisted that I am *culturally* Jewish even though I don't practice Judaism as a religion. In part this is the age-old point of many nonbelieving Jews: "Until the last antisemite is dead, I'm Jewish!"

Beginning in 1977, I have been quite involved with Camp Kinderland, a children's camp that originally was run by people close to or in the Communist Party but which has survived in recent decades on the strength of its tradition as a wonderful, relatively inexpensive place for children to spend the summer as well as a place that celebrates that which is good and worthwhile in the Jewish cultural tradition. I think everyone draws on everything they can from their own personal experiences as well as family backgrounds. Religious training, ethnic identification, exposure to musical, literary, artistic and other aspects of a culture can be a powerful foundation on which to begin one's self-construction as a full human being. However, it is essential to acknowledge that all of these identifications can have a down-side, particularly if it degenerates into "one-upsmanship" of identifying how superior my group/food/music/clothing/religion/philosophy is compared to yours. I draw on some of my Jewish roots from time to time; I also draw on my knowledge of black history and black culture as well for

other strengths and lessons. I was born Jewish, I retain a Jewish identity, part of me is culturally Jewish—but an even greater part of me is typical American who came of age in the 1960s.

Barbara: I suspect that for many of us, there were more connections than we were aware of at the time between being ethnically, or culturally, Jewish, and being—if not exactly typical Americans of the Sixties—nevertheless in some ways typical young people who became involved in the movements of the time.

There were lots of Jews in the movements of the Sixties, especially in New York, especially in the early years, before opposition to the war made what had been a small left a mass movement. Even then, Jews continued to be involved way out of proportion to our percentage of the population. At the time hardly anyone pointed this out, or asked what it meant. I think people avoided this issue partly because many young Jews wanted to be seen as Americans rather than Jews (on some level it still appeared to be a choice; if you were a Jew, you weren't a real American). For the same reason, I think many people hoped that the public would not notice how many Jews there were in the movement, for fear that it would discredit the movement.

Michael: Notice how this fit in with Allen's point about the Old Left Jews playing down their Jewish identity, even to the point of taking gentile sounding names.

Barbara: Finally, I think that for many young Jews who had grown up in middle class, liberal Jewish homes, in which Jewish culture took the form of religious observances that no one took very seriously, rebellion against the older generation included rebellion against Jewish identity. I felt differently, because I had grown up surrounded by the much more attractive culture of the Jewish left, the Yiddish heritage that Michael described, and also because I made such an effort to learn about it and become part of it.

I think the fact that so many young Jews were drawn to the movement testifies to the continued influence of the Jewish tradition of protest on behalf of social justice—despite the fact that for most Jews that tradition was submerged in the Fifties. It was as if the young Jews of the Sixties were drawing upon an earlier tradition that many were only dimly aware of. This was of course different for those of us who grew up in and around the Old Left: like Michael, I grew up singing "*Zog Nit Keynmol*," being told stories of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, thinking of being Jewish as meaning a legacy of opposition to oppression—plus a vital intellectual tradition—rather than thinking of it in negative terms.

I suspect that how we grew up thinking about the Holocaust had a lot to do with how Jews of our generation felt about being Jews. I was aware that most Jews had not fought back; but all the stories I knew were about those who had. Perhaps because most of the Jewish resistance to the Nazis was organized by groups on the left—Jewish Communists, the Bund, socialist Zionists—young Jews growing up in mainstream families, in the Fifties, were not as likely to hear the same stories. Jews who wanted to fit in, if they knew these stories, hardly wanted to pass them on to their children. I knew Jews in the New Left who had never heard of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Their picture of the Holocaust was that Jews had not fought back. It is understandable that this fostered a sense of shame about being Jewish.

Q: Mike can you talk a little bit more about your experience with the Wisconsin Alliance and Allen and Barbara, Mike seems to suggest that electoral politics were an option where he was, can you talk about whether it was in your two experiences?

Michael: I lived in a neighborhood when I went to graduate school, I wasn't in University housing. We quickly began to see that there was a severe dichotomy between people in the community and the University. And we gravitated towards other older graduate students, many of them married, many of whom lived in our neighborhood and some were involved in things like power structure research. And there was this one guy in particular, his name was Dick Krooth, who was a researcher who actually was older than we were, he was a lawyer in Atlanta and then [had] moved to Wisconsin. I think his wife went to graduate school while he was a researcher (he earned his living working for attorneys during tax season). We wrote up a detailed pamphlet throwing together a whole bunch of populist sounding economics and what we thought was the right approach to black nationalism (arguing for black control of black communities) and a whole bunch of other things very much trying to build on the old Wisconsin Progressive tradition because the State of Wisconsin, for instance, had introduced all sorts of progressive legislation early in the 20th century. In addition to being the state of Joe McCarthy it was also the state of Robert LaFollette who had won Wisconsin's electoral votes in 1924.[47]

Allen: It also was the first state to pass a Gay Rights law.

Michael: That occurred more recently, but you're right, it does have good traditions. So we tried to build on that. We named ourselves the Wisconsin Alliance, we issued this pamphlet, we ran candidates for City Council and Mayor, even, and the County Board. By the time I left Wisconsin in May of 1970, we had a couple of members of the City Council and of the County Board, and I think the Party grew in the early 1970s. At one point there was even national coverage in *Newsweek* because the Alliance had sent little brigades out to farm country to help some farmers who were in trouble. I never followed what happened after that, but I was very proud ... I worked very hard on that pamphlet, Dick Krooth and I and the other people on the group worked on it, reworked it. We even at one point gave it to the guy I always considered one of my mentors, the guy I was always so impressed with, the historian William Appleman Williams, who actually rewrote the pamphlet but it was too damn late, it was already at the printer—but his rewrite would have made it ten times better than what we ourselves did. It was just

a twist of fate. To me his potential participation was great.

We actually sent a delegate to the national Peace and Freedom Party Convention in 1968. We got ten votes or something. We cast it for Eldridge Cleaver instead of for Dick Gregory[48] and then we ran a couple of people in the local election. We weren't on the ballot of course. There were some states where we [Peace and Freedom Party] were. In Minnesota right next door, Eldridge CLeaver got 1200 votes on the Peace and Freedom Party line in 1968. I thought it was the potential wave of the future.

Allen: You can even tell by the way he said it, "1200 votes in Minnesota"—like we're supposed to be impressed! [laughter] You know, that's two blocks in Minneapolis!! [more laughter] I remember how disdainful many of us were about electoral politics. I have a clear memory of the time when Eugene McCarthy was campaigning for the Presidency on an anti-war program. This was in 1967 and '68. The slogan was "clean for Gene." A lot of the people in the anti-war movement had the so-called hippie appearance of long hair and brightly colored clothing and beads and so on (nose rings hadn't quite come in at that time!). The slogan was "clean for Gene" which meant clean up (shave, etc.) to campaign more effectively for Gene McCarthy. I remember myself and friends in SDS being very disdainful of this whole thing. We're talking about revolution, we're trying to get people into the street to have demonstrations against "the system," we're trying to liberate ourselves personally through our appearance (although I didn't have a "hippie look" at that time). The McCarthy campaign was in some way contradictory to what we wanted to accomplish. I wrote a very disdainful article (printed in the *Guardian*) about the campaign whereas in retrospect I think that McCarthy's was a very important effort and I don't think that I would be so inclined now to put it down. But it was certainly very very different from what we were trying to do.

Barbara: I was somewhat involved in the Peace and Freedom Party in the Bay Area. I never felt that in my section of the left people were opposed to electoral politics. There were a lot of people who were involved in it. It wasn't the kind of thing that I was good at, or really wanted to do.

Michael: Since we're running out of time, I'm going to call on people who can ask questions or say something and we will then answer them in writing when we submit this for publication.

Q: If you look at your self-identification on the program you seem to be doing wildly different things now and I was wondering what your relationships to the left are now and where the left is now.

Michael: I am actually in very much the same relationship with the movement that I was in the late 1960s. I am a "free lancer" never having found an organization to join. I have contributed some of my abilities as a teacher of economics to the Center for Popular Economics in Amherst, Massachusetts which attempts to make economics from a pro-working class, anti-racist, anti-sexist approach understandable to activists, and ordinary people in general. We attempt to demystify economics so people can see through some of the garbage that members of my profession are constantly shovelling at us.[49] I still write letters to newspapers, intervene in discussions on electronic mail discussion lists, etc. Of course, between 1974 and 1978 I was actively involved in attempting to re-open my parents' case. In that context, I often found myself having an opportunity to speak at meetings organized around this or that left-wing issue. In 1977, for example, I shared a platform with Elaine Brown of the Black Panther Party at an Oakland Church. In 1978, in commemorating the 25 anniversary of the execution there was a day long rally in New York's Union Square (the site of an emotionally wrenching rally/demonstration the night of the execution). The speaker's platform included Communists, Gay Rights Activists, anti-war veteran Ron Kovic, American Indian Movement leader Russell Means, and the list goes on and on. Recently, in 1993, my brother and I spoke at a rally sponsored by the North Star Fund which gave its annual Frederick Douglass award to my parents, imprisoned Native American activist Leonard Peltier, and a high school group in New York called Youth UPrising. At all of these meetings, I find myself "preaching" the same "line". The government is strong and stronger because they divide us. We have to find ways to make common cause because, *we're all in this together.*

Q: I did my dissertation on the transformation and persistence of the counter-culture in the 70s and 80s and I searched a portion of Allen's papers in Madison looking for clues to the question of how he responded to the charges of his political friends that going back to the land represented a depoliticization, a retreat to pastoralism. So I'm curious as to how you responded to that charge at that period as well as your relection on that in more recent years.

Allen: In the back-to-the-land movement, there was a lot of "Earth Mother/Man with Hachet" gender division in the households and communes, but I think that the feminist movement had an influence there and things started to change.

Q: Did you see it as political. Did you redefine politics to defend what you were doing?

Allen: I think initially I did. It was a mixture of communalist ideology and retreat. "Retreat" in the sense not so much of running away from political change, but the desire to have what I call a more ordinary life. When I was younger there was this idea of making history, belonging to a revolutionary movement. We had the slogan, which I think was a Black Panther slogan, "Revolution in our Lifetime," which is different from that long view that my co-panelists were talking about. "Revolution in our Lifetime": that's why we couldn't be bothered with electoral politics—it took too long! [laughter] But I

think that my desire now is just to live a more ordinary life and not feel that every moment has to be based on a political decision or on changing the world.

Q. I'm also curious about counter-cultural relationships. You described your Communist background as something that made you somewhat conservative within the New Left movement or a force for stability. I don't hear any of you saying that you were really forcefully seeing yourselves as part of the counter-culture or taking on the cultural aspects of this movement. I'd be interested to hear some comment on your thoughts on the relationship between the communist dimension and the counterculture dimension of the New Left.

Michael: I think that's why I never was into the counter-culture. I liked the music (though initially I liked acoustic folk-music more than electric stuff...) but never went in for, as Allen says, brightly colored clothes, beads, etc. I had longer hair in the 1970s than I did in the 1960s! Whether it was my red-diaper baby background or my age, I don't know.

Q: I'll resist the temptation to connect with a great many things you've said with my own life. I think I'm a few years older than all of you and lived through a lot of these kinds of things. I particularly appreciate, Allen, your connecting with the gay rights movement since I'm speaking on lesbianism tomorrow that also seems a natural evolution of the [New Left] still it's problematic in ways that I'd like to hear you talk about. Barbara, I've heard you talk on Identity Politics at my campus and you were the first person to challenge that idea of Identity Politics and I'd be interested in knowing whether your early experience is related to that, indeed how all of you respond to multiculturalism. That's far too big a question to take up here. It seems to me, however, that it's terribly relevant.

Allen: I'll take a quick stab since my name was mentioned a couple of times. It seems immodest to recommend a book I've written but if anybody is really interested I did write a book called *Gays Under the Cuban Revolution* which deals a lot with my own personal evolution as well as the specifics of what was happening in Cuba. That book, I believe, is still in print. (There's also a Spanish language edition if anybody wants that I've got 2000 of them at home!) [laughter] The counter-culture was very important to me. I was slow in developing an affinity for the counter-culture. I mentioned that I started smoking pot at a fairly early age compared to some of my other friends and I did get pretty heavily immersed into psychedelic drugs in the early 70s. I think that the Old Left was horrified at the drug culture and was very hostile to it. The New Left embraced it for the most part, although there were some sectors of the New Left that were against it for basically for probably Old Left types of reasons. I think that for me personally, the psychedelic drugs in the early 70s influenced me to change my life in a lot of ways. It put me a lot in touch with my appreciation for nature. I don't like to say that it made me a more spiritual person because I don't particularly feel an affinity for New Age spirituality, but if I think if there is anything "spiritual" about me it has a lot to do with gardening and my appreciation for nature and I associate that with my drug experiences.

Then there's the whole interest in "wild" parties and more overt sexuality as part of the hippie scene. I'm not sure how different that is from the beatniks and Bohemians before them. I think you have the old traditions of Bohemianism and the old traditions of Marxism coming together in a more modernized form in the New Left. In that sense, I think the counter-culture was very important.

Barbara: I want to say something about Identity Politics/ Multiculturalism. I think one of the things that my background gave me was a sense that it's possible to build a movement in which there are many different constituencies. I'm not against Identity Politics in the sense that it's a good thing to have movements of of particular constituencies, but one of the things about identity politics that I resist is a tendency for that to become fragmented, a series of movements that don't understand themselves as having anything to do with each other. I don't think of Identity Politics and multiculturalism as the same thing. In the early Black movement and for that matter in the very early years of the New Left we talked about building an interracial movement and that's what I'm still in favor of. And I happen to think that one of the tragedies of the late 1960s was that the various movements that emerged, first the Black Power movement, then the women's movement, emerged with a separtist tone to them and again with the idea that militancy was equated with separatism rather than with the idea of trying to fight racism and sexism within the movement as a whole. And I really do think that my "take" on that comes from my experience—well particularly, having been in a movement where really it was possible to be relatively equal as a woman. And I think there are a lot of women who haven't had that experience and can't really believe that such a thing would be possible and who think that the only way you can be politically active as a woman is to be in an entirely autonomous women's movement.

Michael: I'm going to have the last word about multiculturalism, because I also have been fighting this kind of battle with my students trying to get them to see the relevance of for example, the experience of African Americans. I teach at a 99% lily white school—the students don't even cover up the way they feel, and it can be pretty hair-raising at times in the classroom. My take has always been that what is called identity politics and the struggles of various groups are absolutely essential. It's essential that groups coalesce and set their own agendas, but that it is always possible to make coalitions. For example, the Wisconsin Alliance even as an "embryo" in 1968 was aiming for that. The thing I liked about the Peace and Freedom Party was that they had some kind of relationship, at least in the Bay Area, with the Panthers. They ran Huey Newton for Congress for example. In other words, the Panthers were not going to be total separat-

ists. They didn't say, we'll have nothing to do with these white folks. They had some relationship on a, you know, quid pro quo basis, and I constantly stress that whenever I speak. I try to make coalition the centerpiece of what I'd like to see happen. And I absolutely am chagrined and upset by what I call the successful frame-up of the multiculturalist movement on the so-called PC line. Let's remember, PC at first was our own joke *within* the movement—"Oh my God, that's not quite 'politically correct'!". When we outgrew the idea of having the "right line" we used to make jokes about it. Well, it's not so funny anymore. Dinesh D'Souza is making a million dollars spreading all that crap over the country.[50] I resist those kinds of "criticisms" of multiculturalism and identity politics but I do hold out the prospect of these various groups being in coalition with each other because, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, we are all in this together.

NOTES

[1] Since I shared a lot of experiences with my brother Robert, I urge readers who want a broader background to my particular situation, to consult Robert and Michael Meeropol, *We Are Your Sons, The Legacy of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg* (Urbana, Ill: U. of Illinois Press). (Unless otherwise noted, all references to this book will be to the second edition). For my brother's experiences during the 1960s, see pp. 259-338. I would like to take this opportunity to thank by two co-panelists for comments on an earlier draft and for stimulating discussions about these issues over the past several months. I would also like to thank Audree Penner of Swarthmore College who read an earlier draft and made many helpful comments.

[2] For a very brief description of the "space" left for the children of radicals to grow because McCarthyism did not grow into full blown fascism, see *We Are Your Sons*, First Edn (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1975): 393-5. For an outsider's perceptions, see Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties, Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (NY: Bantam, 1987): 67-75.

[3] See *We Are Your Sons:* 222-3 and the sixth page of photographs. (photograph only in First Edition).

[4] For me, the original source of this knowledge was Michael Sayers and Albert E. Kahn *The Great Conspiracy The Secret War Against Soviet Russia* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1946), which I read when I was 10. As I became conversant with historical writings, new information and details would be added to the already present interpretation. D.F. Fleming's *Origins and History of the Cold War* was an early work that I remember quite vividly. Later on, I was most heavily influenced by William Appleman Williams. See his "US Intervention into Russia, 1917-1923" *Studies on the Left.*

[5] Here, even the mainstream literature is pretty much in agreement. See Hugh Thomas *The Spanish Civil War* (Hammondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1965): 331-339. Despite his attacks on Soviet duplicity in its dealings with the Spanish Republic, the way the "non-intervention" of France, Britain and the United States harmed the Republic while Germany and Italy supplied a tremendous amount of aid is quite clear. For details of actual aid that reached all sides in the Spanish Civil War, see Thomas: 793-803.

[6] Here my major source was the *National Guardian* a newspaper that one could fairly characterize as "fellow traveller" in its outlook. The paper was independent, and in fact its three founders, Cedric Belfrage, John McManus and James Aronson were not communists themselves. Nevertheless, except in rare circumstances (such as the Soviet invasion of Hungary and subsequent trial and execution of Hungarian leader Imre Nagy), it presented a pro-Soviet point of view. For an "insider's history" see, James Aronson and Cedric Belfrage *Something to Guard, The Stormy Life of the National Guardian: 1948-1967* (NY: Columbia U. Press, 1978).

[7] See Richard O. Boyer and Herbert M. Morais, *Labor's Untold Story* (NY: United Electrical and Machine Workers of America, 1955). This book told some gripping stories from labor history. Among the incidents that made a great impression on me when I read them were the story of the "Molly Maguires" (Irish unionists convicted of sabotage and murder) (47-58), the great Pullman strike of 1894 which launched the career of Eugene V. Debs and was the basis of a major novel by Howard Fast *The American* (123-131), the frame-up of mining union leader Big Bill Haywood for murder (157-170), and the great sit-down strike at Flint, Michigan during the Depression (298-309).

[8] *We the People* (NY: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1947) was the first "radical history" of the U.S. that I read (actually it was read to me when I was eleven). I still remember its story of the undemocratic nature of the Constitution (pp. 89-92), and how the 14th Amendment "a law to help Negroes" became a way to protect business from regulation by state governments (pp. 241-3).

[9] The high school ran from 7th through 12th grade. The elementary school [The Little Red School House] began with four year olds. See Barbara Epstein's article in this issue for more reference to Elisabeth Irwin School.

[10] See *We Are Your Sons*: 112 for an experience when I didn't keep my identity secret. See p. 148 and 241-242 about how I tried to hide my identity. From that point until Robert and I finally publicly identified ourselves as our parents children, I was conflicted by a real desire to maintain my privacy and a desire to "atone" for my denials of my parents when I was young by publicly associating myself with them. For the decision I made not to change my name to Rosenberg when Robert turned 21, see p. 316. For Robert's own decision-making process, see p. 361.

[11] See, for example, Jonah Raskin *Out of the Whale, Growing Up in the American Left* (NY: Links Books, 1974): 1-24.

[12] *We Are Your Sons*, First Edn: 393. Marx's essay was "The Civil War in France" and can be found in Emile Burns A Handbook of Marxism (NY: International Publishers, 1935): 133-157. Jellinek's book is The Paris Commune of 1871 (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933). Lenin's essay "The Paris Commune" was a little Lenin library publication by International Publishers.

[13] [14] 5): 269.

[15] The English language differences in Genesis 4.7 continue. The Revised Standard version of the Bible admonishes Cain, that he *must* triumph over sin. The Dartmouth Bible promises that man *will* ('shalt') triumph over sin. The official Jewish translation is permissive, you *can* triumph.

[16] My memory is that we got through the first four chapters of Volume I and that was it. I didn't try to read it again until I had graduated from Swarthmore and was at Cambridge University in Britain.

[17] (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1956). In my opinion, the first 236 pages of this book still remain one of the best ways to introduce someone to Marxian political economy. The rest of the book is out of date, even in the author's view. For Sweezy's later views, see Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy *Monopoly Capital* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1966).

[18] See Alvin H. Hansen *Full Recovery or Stagnation?* (NY, 1938). For a counter-argument see George Terborgh *The Bogey of Economic Maturity* (Chicago: 1945). Before Baran and Sweezy's book was published, I was already very excited by my reading of *Maturity and Stagnation in American Capitalism* by Josef Steindl (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1952).

[19] Joan Robinson was one of the group of extraordinary individuals who participated in the "Keynesian Revolution" at Cambridge University in the early 1930s. Beginning with her 1942 book, *An Essay on Marxian Economics* (Second Ed. NY: St. Martin's Press, 1966) she engaged in a long and fruitful dialogue with Marxists and "would-be" Marxists (like me). Throughout her career which began with the publication of *The Economics of Imperfect Competition* in 1933 and did not end until she died in 1988, she made a number of contributions to mainstream economics. It is a shame the Nobel Prize committee didn't see fit to award her one before her death. Talking to her about essays that I had tried to write and listening to her lecture were among the highlights of my years at Cambridge. I am extremely grateful to Paul Sweezy who wrote her a letter at the time I applied to Cambridge University in 1964. Bob Rowthorn was elected a fellow at King's College in 1965, my second year at Cambridge. He was young, brilliant and left-wing. I learned a tremendous amount from him. He has had a wonderful career with a significant number of publications. His essays were collected in a book, Capitalism, Conflict and Inflation: Essays in Political Economy (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980). Maurice Dobb was an extremely prominent Marxist economist. I knew of him at Swarthmore because of his book *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1946). Though I never was supervised by him, he was very generous with his time. Early in my stay at Cambridge, he invited me to dinner where I met Steven C. Rankin. Steve had arrived to Cambridge after a brilliant career at Wesleyan University. He combined advanced mathematical skills with the ability to really understand Marxian economics. Since I was just beginning to do that, I really appreciated the times we spent together. He has remained an economist, but I lost touch with him. D. Mario Nuti was a graduate student at Cambridge, and in fact he received his Ph D from the University soon after I left. He had studied the economics of socialist economies in Poland (learning to speak Polish as fluently as he spoke English and Italian) under the great Mikhal Kalecki (who had independently "discovered" Keynesian economics on his own in the 1930s) and actually earned a fellowship at King's College before he finished his doctorate. He has had a remarkable career since, and in 1980 while I and my family were on sabattical in Britain, we spent a number of wonderful days with him and his family in Birmingham where he had just been made director of the Center for Russian and Eastern European Studies. He has since moved on to a Professorship in Italy. During my second year in Cambridge, I became friendly with Michael Moohr, who had arrived at Cambridge after graduating from the University of Illinois. He did an economic history Ph D under Phyllis Deane and then got his first job at the University of Virginia in 1967. Though his scholarship has always been impeccable, his radicalism quickly made him an isolated outcast in that reactionary department and he moved on to Bucknell University in the early 1970s. I have had the pleasure of continued interaction with him over the years. It was conversational interaction with these individuals and others which helped me take the raw materials of the various readings I had done in economics and fashion them into an evolving coherent world view.

[20] (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1961). William A. Williams has been one of three or four major intellectual influences on me. I highly recommend everyone, even if you're not a student of history to read the excellent new biography of this giant of the American historical profession and the dissenting academy of the 1960s Paul Buhle and Edward Rice-Maximim, T*he Tragedy of Empire, A Biography William Appleman Williams*, (NY: Routledge, 1995).

[21] See Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (NY: The MacMillan Co., 1935). Beard was heavily, and in my opinion, successfull criticized by Forrest McDonald's work *We the People, The Economic Origins of the Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) which I read in my American history seminar at Swarthmore. It is important at this point to express my debt to Professor Robert Bannister of Swarthmore College. Bob did not agree with "the economic interpretation of history" as expressed by leftists like myself but he was open minded enough not to squelch us. He challenged us to think clearly and to make our points consistently. I benefted greatly from his sharp questioning and counter-evidence measured with just the right amount of encouragment.

[22] "The Four" were, Charlotte Phillips, Jeremiah Gelles, Miriam Feingold and Michael Manove. I became very close friends with Jerry and Mike at Swarthmore, though I haven't seen much of them since. Jerry left Swarthmore after his junior year to enter NYU Medical School. He joined PL when arriving in New York and was one of the reasons I was more open-minded about that organization than most of my friends. He practics

medicine in New York. Mike graduated with a degree in mathematics but switched to economics in Graduate School. He currently teaches at Boston University. Very recently, he was interviewed on the show 60 Minutes which helped expose potential hanky-panky on the part of BU President John Silber with some University investment income. Mimi (now Miriam Real) went on a Freedom Ride in the summer of 1961, worked in Louisiana later on and in the Hoboken, N.J. project of the SDS Economic Research and Action Program (ERAP) after graduating from Swarthmore. She later returned to Louisiana a number of times to do an extensive oral history of the people with whom she had worked on voter registration. She completed a Ph D in History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and later opened an oral history consulting firm in the Bay Area of California. Charlotte spent six months as an exchange student at Tugaloo College (a black college near Jackson, Mississippi). She married another activist from Swarthmore, Oliver Fein, and together they worked in the Cleveland ERAP project [see James Miller Democracy is *in the Streets, From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (NY: Simon and Shuster, 1987): 197-217.] from 1964-1969. She became a founding member of the Lincoln Hospital Pediatric Collective in the Bronx, N.Y. She and Oli practice medicine in New York. Though I have not maintained contact with "the four" and with Oli (who was one year ahead of them), their personal examples, their characters, their commitment to intellectual honesty, and the fact that they were just great people to be around played an extremely important role in my personal development while I was at Swarthmore.

[23] For the significance of this document, see Kirkpatric Sale, SDS (New York: Random House, 1973): 105-107 Carl was an extremely close friend for a couple of years at Swarthmore and then we drifted apart. I was in awe of him for many years and when I read "A Gay Manifesto" I realized that there was a whole side of him I had never guessed at. This same thing was true when Allen Young came out in 1969. Unfortunately, I never got to reconnect with him after we left Swarthmore. When he died with AIDS, I was very sorry to have lost that opportunity forever.

[24] This brings to mind a humorous side story. When I was a junior, the college hired an extremely brilliant young Philosophy Professor, Lawrence Sklar. Larry and his wife, a former student acquaintance one or so years older than me, lived in the same dorm that I did and I ended up spending a lot of time with him. He probably liked me (perhaps he knew about my identity) but he couldn't *stand* my politics. He was so much more brilliant than I was that he used to absolutely destroy me in the various arguments we had. He also could be quite an extremist in his argumentation and points of view. When Carl was "under discussion" among the faculty, Larry voiced the extreme libertarian point that Carl's activities off campus were *totally irrelevant* to whether or not he should be allowed to stay on campus. Larry opined that even if Carl were convicted of First Degree Murder, he should not be expelled from the school. I was taking a philosophy seminar in ethics at the time and my Professor wryly observed that "not too many" faculty shared Larry's extreme position. (Now that I'm older I'd love another chance to argue politics with Larry!)

[25] My sources for a positive view of Cuba were *Monthly Review* and the *National Guardian*. For a supportive summary history of the Cuban Revolution up to the early 1970s, see Herbert L. Matthews *Revolution in Cuba* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975). Needless to say, my enthusiasm for the Cuban Revolution has been tempered by Allen's experiences and information.

[26] Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* is available in many different anthologies. International Publishers put out a version as part of the Little Lenin Library in 1933. There is an anthology in many libraries, Emile Burns *A Handbook of Marxism* (NY: International Publishers, 1935). Lenin's essay is on pp. 688-720. The original Leninist formulation is actually quite dated because it focuses a great deal on how imperialist rivalry leads to wars among imperial powers. Also, although Lenin himself is not this explicit, much analysis of imperialism equates it with actual colonialism. Since the U.S. has had very few formal colonies in its history, any definition of imperialism that identifies it with colonialism will end up defining away "American imperialism." Thus, I believe that the analysis in William A. Williams' *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (NY: Delta, 1962), especially in the first chapter entitled "Imperial Anticolonialism" is much more fruitful for understanding that the U.S. is an imperial nation. For an influential treatment from the 1960s see Harry Magdoff, *The Age of Imperialism* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1969).

[27] For the Congo, see Conor Cruise O'Brien *To Katanga and Back: A UN Case History* (London, Hutchinson, 1962). For Cuba, see Matthews: chs. 2, 9, 18.

[28] See Raymond Garthoff, "The Havana Conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 1 (Spring 1992): 2-3. We also have learned that the link between Moscow and the Soviet Commander in charge of the medium-range missiles that could have reached U.S. territory was one ship used to relay communications and that the Soviets were extremely worried that a naval engagement would cause the U.S. to destroy that ship, thereby leaving Moscow without any control over the other missiles.

[29] I was drawn to the song, in part, because Bob Dylan wrote it during the Cuban Missile Crisis when he, as did I, thought war and the apocalypse was coming any day. As he later described it, he thought of each line as the title or lead of a song he would never get to write.

[30] For that important march, see Gitlin: 178-186. My memories include the uncompromising statements in favor of withdrawl made by both Gruening and Lynd. There was no "even-handedness" (that is obligatory attacks against the Communists in Vietnam—equating North Vietnamese "aggression" in their own country with the U.S. invasion of Vietnam) which I believed was a wishy-washy cop out. To me and other red diaper babies the U.S. was not a misguided, well meaning, clumsy superpower. We were on the *wrong side*.

[31] Paul Cowan's autobiography, *The Making of an Un-*

American (NY: Delta, 1970) chronicles the development of a radicalism forged in the experiences of a Jew at racist, anti-semitic Choate in the late 1950s, early 1960s, working on a Kibbutz in Israel, tutoring in Cambridge, Maryland in the summer of 1963 (where numerous Swarthmore students were involved), and working in Mississippi during Freedom Summer of 1964. His experiences with Mr. Erich Hoffmann while he was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ecuador are detailed on pp. 245-366.

[32] Three excellent sources on SDS are Sale, Gitlin, and Miller. Sale describes a fascinating incident where an employee of the Wisconsin State Historical Society was given carte blanche to take SDS files for their archives in exchange for some quick cash needed by the Weatherpeople for bail money and whatever. Just as he had loaded the van, Chicago Police tried to confiscate it but he argued that the documents were by then the property of the "sovereign State of Wisconsin" and was able to take them (see Sale: 647).

[33] Philadelphia: Temple U. Press, 1990: 210-215.

[34] This probably needs a bit of elaboration, lest that one line be seized upon by the "anti-PC police" as one more atrocity perpetrated by a "tenured radical." I take it as a given that any teacher, particularly a college teacher, has her/his primary responsibility the stimulation of students to think for themselves in exploring issues. This is particularly true in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The way I design my classes involves getting students to *take ideas seriously*. Among the ideas that I insist students take seriously are radical ideas. They are not the only ideas I present to students and I do not grade them by how well they parrot my personal opinions. However, there is no question that my personal radicalism does introduce certain readings and issues into courses that might normally not be considered if the same course were taught by a mainstream or right wing faculty member. That's what that last sentence means.

[35] *University Review* 32 (November, 1973): 17.

[36] The Cleveland project is discussed extensively in Miller: 197-217.

[37] When Paul read an earlier version of this paper, he wrote me the following letter: "In looking back, I see I was influenced by 20 years in Champaign County [Illinois] (where elections were always a joke, because Republicans never lost) and perhaps a couple years in Connecticut (where the anti-war movement always seemed in danger of getting swallowed up in one liberal Democratic party campaign or another). Syndicalism was an easy way of phrasing what I think of as deep pessimism about electoral politics. It's not (I hope) that I thought the referendum was a bad idea but that my experiences (including Mari Jo's extended blue collar family in North Chicago) made me expect every door would be slammed in the face of the canvasser. ... I really regret making any discouraging remarks. Nothing works so everything should be tried." Amen to that last sentence, Paul. And you weren't discouraging, just stimulating!

[38] See Allen Young's article in this issue.

[39] *We Are Your Sons*, 329.

[40] For Weatherman, see footnote 30 in Allen Young's article in this issue..

[41] For the "New Year's Gang" so named because their first action was on New Year's Eve in 1969-70, see Gitlin: 408. In August of 1970, they blew up the Army Math Research Center which had been the target of numerous demonstrations and "exposes" for over a year. Though it was late at night, a graduate student was working there and was accidently killed.

[42] All three later joined the Weather Underground. Eleanor (now Stein) and Cathy Wilkerson surfaced in the early 1980s and are now involved in the legal profession. Kathy Boudin remained underground until she was captured at a robbery in Nyack, N.Y.

[43] See Sale 460-463, 506-410, 559-563 for details of the SDS national conventions where the need to prove oneself a true "Marxist Revolutionary" ended up creating long-winded turgid statements which the vast majority of rank and file SDS members had not interest in and gained nothing from.

[44] See Gitlin: 413-417.

[45] Bettina Aptheker Kurzwell is the daughter of Communist Party theoretician and well known author Herbert Aptheker. She was active in the movement in Berkeley during the 1960s and because of her name, her political ties to the Communist Party were pretty obvious.

[46] This refers to a famous concert organized by the Harlem Chapter of the Civil Rights Congress (an organization that fought racism and repression of civil liberties in the immediate postwar period, and was later destroyed as "Communiste Front" by government repression) in 1949 at Peekskill, NY. Anti-communist mobs attacked the concert grounds and forced its postponement. The postponed concert finally occurred with a massive phalanx of trade unionists circling the grounds to keep out the "protesters." When the concert was finished, the concert-goers' vehicles were stoned by the mob. E.L. Doctorow's novel *The Book of Daniel* which fictionalizes the experience of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg as Paul and Rochelle Isaacson has the Isaacsons and their young son, Daniel, attending Peekskill and then getting caught up in the violence afterwards. What Doctorow did not know, but of course could have surmised is that Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were, in fact at the concert (though not with their children) and according to people who spent the summer with them, returned to their summer bungalow community in somber silence. For the Civil Rights Congress see, Gerald Horne *Communist Front? The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-56.* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987). For the Peekskill events see Howard Fast, *Peekskill: USA. A Personal Experience* (NY: Civil Rights Congress, 1951), Charles Wright, "Paul Robeson at Peekskill." *Paul Robeson: The Great Forerunner* by the editors of *Freedomways* (NY: Dodd, Mead, 1965). See also, "Peekskill Riots" *Encyclopedia of the American Left.*

[47] For the career of Robert M. LaFollette see David P. Thelen *Robert M. LaFollette and the Insurgent Spirit* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), Robert S. Maxwell *LaFollette and the Rise of the Progressives in Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1956).

LaFollette's wife and daughter collaborated on a two volume biography: *Robert M. LaFollette, June 14, 1885-June 18, 1925* chs. 1-26 by Belle Case LAFollette, chs. 27-72 by Fola FaFollette (NY: MacMillan, 1953).

[48] Dick Gregory had been a political comic from the very beginning. You can follow the early development of his politics in his autobiography *Nigger*. (Dick Gregory and Robert Lipsyte, [New York: Dutton, 1964]). In 1967 he began to campaign for the Presidency writing a book called *Write Me In*. In a number of states, there was an interest among Peace and Freedom Party activists to nominate Dick Gregory because he already had some national name recognition (Walter Cronkite would always refer to him on television as "Negro Comedian, Dick Gregory"). The majority of Peace and Freedom Party people, however, wanted the more radical Eldridge Cleaver (author of *Soul on Ice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), Minister of Information in the Black Panther Party) as standard bearer. Cleaver was involved in a shoot out with police in 1969 and jumped bail rather than submit to trial. He lived in Cuba and Algeria for several years, and eventually returned to the country in the mid-1970s with a 180 degree change in politics and joined the Campus Crusade for Christ. (See Eldridge Cleaver, Post Prison Writing & Speeches, Robert Scheer, ed. [New York: Radom House, 1969]. For his conversion see Soul on Fire [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1978]). Dick Gregory went on to a distinguished career as a political speaker on the college lecture circuit. He has engaged in many liquid-only fasts for a number of political causes and has remained true to his humanistic, anti-authoritarian politics with a strong emphasis on personal health and helping the morbidly obese to lose weight and improve the quality of their lives.

[49] The Center for Popular Economics (CPE) is at Box 785, Amherst, MA, 01004. They are also available online at cpe@acad.umass.edu. They offer week long summer institutes for intense instruction (with lots of participatory activity) as well as road show workshops of one, two or ever three days. They have published *A Field Guide to the US Economy* which has a lot of interesting statistics in accessible form. They also wrote a useful book in 1985 called *The Economic Report of the People* which attempted to "respond" to the *Economic Report of the President* in analyzing the US economy from a left perspective. Recently, they have published *Creating a New World Economy* ed. Gerald Epstein, Julie Graham, Jessica Nemnbhard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993). All of these books are available through CPE, though the last one is also available in bookstores and from the publisher.

[50] See Dinesh D'Souza *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Gender on Campus* (NY: Free Press, Macmillan, Inc., 1991). For a good debate, see Paul Berman, *Debating P.C.: The Controversy Over Political Correctness on College Campuses* (NY: Dell, Laurel, 1992).

LARRY HEINEMANN IS BACK IN THE WORLD, BUT IS IT REALLY *COOLER BY THE LAKE*?

David A. Willson, Holman Library, Green River Community College, Auburn, WA.

This paper was originally prepared for presentation at the conference, "The United States and Vietnam: From War to Peace," University of Notre Dame, December 2-4, 1993.

I decided to write about *Cooler by the Lake* after receiving a letter from Larry Heinemann in which he told me, "The Chicago novel is about half done, and should be completed by the end of the summer—a laugh riot, David, absolutely the funniest book you ever read. Vietnam is not mentioned once and nobody dies."

I recollected that there was plenty Chicago in *Close Quarters* and *Paco's Story*, so I figured that war could figure prominently in *Cooler by the Lake*. So I reread *Close Quarters* and *Paco's Story* and listed all the Chicago references, and there are a shit-load of them. Then I bought *Cooler by the Lake* and raced through it to confirm my suspicions. Not a rigorous scientific method, but then rocket science this ain't. It's more like a paper I wrote in college about another Chicago writer's book, Saul Bellow's *Henderson The Rain King*, which was mostly an inventory of animals and animal images. Dr. Donna Gerstenberger hated my paper, and I got a C. She'd probably give me no better on this one.

I looked up interviews with Heinemann to see what he told others about *Cooler by the Lake*. I found an interview with Eric James Schroeder in *Vietnam, We've All Been There* (162) in which Heinemann says, "It's called *Cooler by the Lake*. Vietnam is not mentioned once, and nobody dies and everybody gets laid." In *Contemporary Authors*, Larry calls *Cooler by the Lake* "a purposefully funny book, a Marx Brothers movie of a book. It will be, as the saying goes a laugh riot; I need to lighten up."

In an interview with Studs Terkel, published in *The Great Divide*, Larry tells a story which he connects to the Vietnam war explicitly. He mentions Vietnam directly three times in the course of his story about driving a CTA bus during the summer of 1968, the time of the famous Democratic National Convention. I recognized the story because *I'd* heard Larry tell the story. Also, I'd read a version of the story in *Cooler by the Lake* (84-86). It becomes an episode in the work history of the hero, Max Nutmeg. And Max (no Vietnam vet, he) behaved exactly the way Larry behaved when he drove a bus for CTA. Quote from Larry Heinemann, with Studs Terkel about Larry Heinemann: "Anyone gave me an argument, I threw em off the bus. This transfer's not good—Woosh!—get out! I was never that way before Vietnam." (Terkel: 253). Quoted from *Cooler by the Lake*: "So Max got the job. And right from the first day Max was your worst bus driver nightmare come true... He tore up transfers, threw people off his bus, 'breezed' the stops when he felt like it, and generally drove the bus like a bulldozer..." (*Cooler*: 84).

It's a mistake to see Max and Larry as the same guy, just as Larry isn't Dosier in *Close Quarters* or Paco in *Paco's Story*. But they are cousins. In his interview with Schroeder, Larry admits he's an author like Mark Twain, in *Life on the Mississippi*, who tries to describe details of his work.

So what's Larry up to in *Cooler by the Lake*? Is he still pouring out his rage at having been a part of an evil war? I think so. And I think he knows he is. The book *is* a laugh riot. I've read it twice through completely and laughed out loud frequently. It's a book made for a bent reference librarian. As with his first two books, I needed to look up arcane references. Mostly, though, in *Cooler by the Lake* he explains them in detail. In *Close Quarters* he refers to Jocko Conlan (36). Who the hell is that I wondered? And Burn 'em up Barnes (82). Who the hell was he? By the context I suspect Jocko Conlan is connected to the All-American game of baseball. And "Burn em" Barnes is in a list with Mario Andretti and A.J. Foyt, so I figure he's a race car driver. I tried half-heartedly to look them up, but it was too much like work so I decided I'd just ask Larry next time I saw him.

But the war references in *Cooler by the Lake* fascinated me. The hastiest reading (unless you are a book reviewer) reveals that *Cooler by the Lake* is infiltrated by war references. Far more references to war are contained in Heinemann's Chicago novel, *Cooler by the Lake*, than Chicago references in *Close Quarters* and *Paco's Story*. These references are often bitter and anti-military in a manner typical of a certain sort of Vietnam veteran, the sort who came back and would not shut up about the war, the vet who says, "It's going to be an evil thing in our lives, and nothing's going to change it." (Terkel: 256) What is Larry up to here? I knew why *Close Quarters* had umpteen Chicago references. The connections to home from Vietnam are expected. The hero is "Dosier from Chicago" (119)—that's who he is identified as.

Even *Paco's Story* has an arcane Chicago reference on the first page—"alewife scuz." Chicago doesn't appear again in *Paco's Story* until page 120, but when it does, it's a familiar story by now: "My father drove a Chicago city bus..." Gallagher tells us. *Contemporary Authors* tells us that Larry Heinemann was, "The son of a Chicago bus driver." (Vol 31: 188) Gallagher and Larry Heinemann are not the same person, but there are similarities.

So there are a couple of Vietnam references in *Cooler by the Lake*, and Larry said there wouldn't be, so what? I think the lies people tell are important. I think it's important to examine the role of war in a laugh riot Marx Brothers of a novel. Larry's "no Vietnam" is more of a dare than a lie or even a promise. Maybe Larry should be forgiven a couple of Vietnam war references popping up accidental-like in a comic novel. Maybe. But the references go way beyond accident. A major character, Deadwood Dave, fails to appear for his induction physical "during the war." (224) Guess which war. Other references: a mention of Little Saigon (119-120) "because of all the Southeast Asian refugees who had settled there since the war;" and, on page 143, "...Mr. Bouillon fell asleep reading Barbara Tuchman's *March of Folly* and quietly died of a stroke."

As you all know, the full title of Tuchman's book is *March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*. Larry's little joke. *Cooler by the Lake* encompasses almost as many wars as Tuchman's book. *Cooler by the Lake* reminded me some of *Forrest Gump* in its comic tone, but it reminded me more of *A Country Made by War: From the Revolution to Vietnam—The Story of America's Rise to Power*, by Geoffrey Perret.

Cooler by the Lake is Larry Heinemann's effective comic vehicle for antiwar diatribes and harangues, a fiction counterpart to Perret's *A Country Made by War*. Tim Sandlin, in his *New York Times Book Review* essay says the pages of *Cooler* resemble a maze or a minefield. He's right; the war references lie in wait around every corner, permeating the very warp and woof of the novel. I've got more than forty pages of war references, but time requires me to pick and choose three of the most interesting. These references to war appear at key points of the plot and act to postpone Max Nutmeg's attainment of his goal and to tempt us, the readers, to rush through and ignore these references to find out what happens to good old Max.

> Twenty years from now his motto would be "Life is hard, and then you die." It had never occurred to Easy Ed to join the army, the navy, the air force, *or* the Marines. "'Be all that you can *what*?' That shit makes my ass sore," he'd say to the army commercials of guys jumping out of helicopters or driving tanks full-tilt down some *autobahn* during the NBA play-offs or the Super Bowl. "*My* mama didn't raise no fool," he'd say, lifting his feet off the coffee table, talking back to the TV, and pointing to his head. Everyone he'd ever known who'd come back from the army, the navy, the air force, or the Marine Corps had seemed hopelessly muddled, forlorn, and disorganized—victims of an endless psychological harassment of military chickenshit. (*Cooler*: 12)

This is ascribed to Easy Ed, but it is very close to Larry's own description of the military:

> **Heinemann**: There's nothing more nutty. If you're an intelligent person, you have to deal with the military mind—being told what to do twenty-four hours a day by lifers, people that in any other circumstance would be shoveling shit in Louisiana somewhere, who don't have the brains, who just don't have it. The guys who think that the Army is just great. And the Army is just a piece of shit. I don't know if anybody else has discussed the military mind with you, but there are people who are running the military, including the Joint Chiefs, who are stone fucking crazy. I think James Webb is stone fucking crazy. Guys like Oliver North—stone fucking crazy. If he had to go out and get a real fucking job, he would be out in the fucking cold. Just trying to explain that kind of insanity in fiction is difficult. (*Vietnam, We've All Been There*: 151-152)

Here's a nice connection made between Nixon and the Nazis:

> ... as well as videos of performance art (some guy snorting water and lying under a slab of bulletproof glass for forty-eight hours, Richard Nixon's "Checkers" speech, head-on train crashes staged for show, and Leni Riefenstahl outtakes of Nazi torchlight parades and Nuremberg political rallies.) (134)

And, finally, a neat connection between the Vietnam war and the American Revolution:

> "... Who are you? What do you want?" said Arthur, who lived in the Corngold Hotel on Kenmore Avenue, very near Argyle Street deep in the neighborhood nowadays called Little Saigon because of all the Southeast Asian refugees who had settled there since the war. (Kenmore Avenue was named for the colonial home of one Colonel Fielding Lewis near Fredricksburg, Virginia; his main claim to fame was the fact that he married George Washington's sister. Argyle Street was named for Archibald Campbell, the first Duke of Argyle, 1701.) (119-120)

If you would like to chase down the other references, you can contact me and I'll tell you all about them. Or you can hunt them down on your own. Here's a list of page numbers to help you get started:

10, 12, 26, 29, 32, 36, 42, 46, 52, 56, 60, 61, 62, 68, 69, 69-70, 75, 76, 84, 91-92, 92, 99, 101, 102, 106, 107, 119-120, 125, 130, 133, 134, 136, 142, 143-144, 162, 167, 169, 176, 219, 224, 225, 226, 231.

> The result is that the average American cannot move without bumping into the country's military past.
>
> At a thousand unnoticed points America's military past impinges on his daily life. Far from being separate and apart from it, that history helps make his life what it is, had been and will be.
>
> The story continues.
>
> —Geoffrey Perret, *A Country Made by War*

Works Cited

Contemporary Authors. New Revision Series, vol. 31. Gale Research, Inc., 1990.

Contemporary Literary Criticism. Vol. 50, Gale Research, Inc., 1988.

Heinemann, Larry. *Close Quarters*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977.

Heinemann, Larry, *Cooler by the Lake*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1992.

Heinemann, Larry, *Paco's Story*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986.

Perret, Geoffrey. *A Country Made by War: From the Revolution to Vietnam—The Story of America's Rise to Power*, Random House, 1989.

Sandlin, Tim. "Maximilian Nutmeg Does the Right Thing," *The New York Times Book Review*, 14 June 1992.

Schroeder, Eric James, *Vietnam, We've All Been There: Interviews with American Writers*, Praeger, 1992.

Terkel, Studs, *The Great Divide: Second Thoughts on the American Dream*, Pantheon Books, 1988.

The Vietnam That Never Was: *The Ugly American* as Intertextual Influence on *Going After Cacciato*

Edward F. Palm, Chair, Language Division,Glenville State College, Glenville, West Virginia 26351.

It is axiomatic in literary history that the worst books exert the greatest influence over real life. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851-1852), of course, stands as the prime example. In a very real sense, as President Lincoln is reported to have said, Stowe was indeed "the little woman who made this great war" (Fields 268-269). Similarly, in our time, much of the credit for launching us wholesale down the road to the civil war that was Vietnam belongs to two writers with equally good intentions, William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick, coauthors of *The Ugly American* (1958).

The Ugly American is an unabashed fictionalized polemic of American innocents abroad—some naively and others venally—losing the Cold-War contest for hearts and minds in a thinly veiled Vietnam the authors call "Sarkhan." The book's message, hammered home in a "Factual Epilogue," is that throughout Southeast Asia the dominoes were beginning to totter, compelling us to step in somewhere or the chain reaction would start. Given the tenor of the times, Lederer and Burdick's novel made Vietnam seem the obvious, and the morally imperative, choice.

Not since Stowe's sentimental novel had any book seemed to define the moment and awaken the popular conscience as well as *The Ugly American*. The book's influence was felt far and wide. President Eisenhower read it and ordered a complete investigation of our foreign-aid program. It especially impressed then-Senator John F. Kennedy, who sent a copy to each of his fellow senators. It was serialized in *The Saturday Evening Post*, becoming a best seller and a Book-of-the-Month Club selection and, eventually, even a movie starring Marlon Brando (Hellmann 15-19). Lederer and Burdick's popular indictment of bungling American innocence abroad went on to became a pervasive part of the intellectual climate of the Fifties and Sixties—even adding an enduring catch-phrase to our language. We carried the guilt of ugly Americanism along with us into Vietnam, nestled in our psychic ALICE packs. It was a burden we were all aware of in varying degrees—along with all the other things we carried. (My apologies to Tim O'Brien; I couldn't resist that one.)

"There are," as Paul Fussell has observed, "some intersections of literature with life that we have taken too little notice of " (7). Likewise, some intersections of literature with literature. To the reader steeped in the popular culture of the Vietnam era, Sarkin Aung Wan's name in Tim O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* is likely to recall "Sarkhan," the setting of *The Ugly American*. Far from representing a merely whimsical choice, this allusion, I believe, holds the key to both O'Brien's theme and

tone. *The Ugly American* is a wonderfully wrongheaded evocation of a Vietnam that never was—the Vietnam we were culturally predisposed to see instead of the one really there. Similarly, Sarkin Aung Wan represents the sort of Vietnamese woman who never really existed, but in whom O'Brien's young protagonist, as the product of his culture, desperately needs to believe. She is, in sum, a figment of Paul Berlin's culturally predetermined imagination. The tone the allusion creates, moreover, is one of bittersweet nostalgia for Lederer and Burdick's now discredited vision of America, throwing a distinctly modernist light over a text too often misread as postmodern.

O'Brien's protagonist, Paul Berlin, is supposed to be an ordinary lower-middle-class young American who clearly understands neither his enemy nor his allies, nor even how to distinguish between them. Six months into his Vietnam tour—that is, at exactly the midway point—Berlin opts to pass an otherwise uneventful night of guard duty in constructing an elaborate day-dream fantasy of the way things could have gone, or should have gone, instead of the way they actually did. The premise on which this metafiction rests is that another young draftee named Cacciato, deeply traumatized by the fragging of the platoon's lieutenant, had deserted with the announced intention of walking to Paris. The platoon, in an effort to save Cacciato from himself, gave chase for a time, but eventually had to give it up, leaving Cacciato to his fate. The novel opens, then, at a point just after this abortive chase, with Berlin spinning this ostensibly realistic fictional premise into a surreal, comic fantasy of what it would have been like had they been able to pursue Cacciato doggedly all the way to Paris.

One of O'Brien's major concerns in this fantasy is to make the reader aware of the extent to which the Vietnam experience was a culturally mediated reality. Personally as well as nationally, our expectations were created and our responses in large measure conditioned by a pervasive American popular culture reflecting an earlier, confident sense of national identity and purpose. The Vietnam of Paul Berlin's imagination, as at least one critic has suggested, is both patterned after and serves the same comedic function as a typical Bing Crosby, Bob Hope "Road" film. These "innocently ridiculous" comedies—one of which, "The Road to Hong Kong," is explicitly mentioned in the text—helped audiences reimagine and imaginatively master their real-life anxieties in much the same manner that Paul Berlin is trying to come to terms with the trauma occasioned by his war (Beidler 22). In keeping with one of the principal conventions of the road-film genre, just as Bob Hope had Dorothy Lamour, Paul Berlin has his love interest—Sarkin Aung Wan. Sarkin's genesis as a figment of Paul Berlin's imagination, and as a character within his elaborate day-dream fantasy trek to Paris, traces to Chapter 39, entitled "The Things They Didn't Know." Interrupting his day-dream fantasy, Berlin reflects back on the ugly Americanism he has witnessed during his six months in Vietnam:

> If he had known the language, he would have told them how he hated to see the villages burned. Hated to see the paddies trampled. How it made him angry and sad when . . . a million things, when women were frisked with free hands, when old men were made to drop their pants to be searched, when in a ville called Thin Mau, Oscar and Rudy Chasler shot down ten dogs for the sport of it. Sad and stupid. Crazy. Mean-spirited and self-defeating and wrong. Wrong! (234)

This reflection follows upon Paul Berlin's memory of how another soldier, much to the general amusement, used to terrorize villagers with near-miss rifle shots when they couldn't understand the mispronounced and ungrammatical Vietnamese he would attempt to glean out of a Vietnamese-English dictionary (231-232). Ashamed of this and other acts of "ugly-Americanism" our side has seemed to condone, and even encourage, he cannot help but be haunted by one particular image of inscrutable innocence:

> A little girl with gold hoops in her ears and ugly scabs on her brow—did she feel, as he did, goodness and warmth and poignancy when he helped doc dab iodine on her sores? Beyond that, though, did the girl *like* him? Lord knows, he had no villainy in his heart, no motive but kindness. He wanted health for her, and happiness. Did she know this? Did she sense his compassion? When she smiled, was it more than a token? And...and what *did* she want? Any of them, what did they long for?....He wanted to be liked. (233)

Sarkin Aung Wan becomes the objective correlative for these anxieties, all of which Lederer and Burdick had raised our national consciousness to feel. She is Berlin's imaginative recreation of the little girl with gold hoop earrings—his attempt to come to terms with, and justify himself before, a culture he could not understand, and which in real life seemed frustratingly indifferent to us and all we had to offer.

As the platoon's lieutenant, a superannuated Korean War veteran, has occasion to remark along the way, the principal problem with Vietnam is that "Nobody likes nobody." "In Korea," he reminisces, "by God, the people liked us....They *liked* us. Respect, that's what it was" (134). According to "Doc," the platoon's medic and resident philosopher, this lieutenant suffers from "nostalgia," a longing to return home to a time and place he understood (163-164). And indeed the tone of Berlin's fantasy becomes increasingly nostalgic as it progresses toward Paris, with Sarkin Aung Wan existing to express the same sort of Willy Loman-like anxiety that informs *The Ugly American*: Our personal and political longing to be not only liked, but well-liked in the Far East.

Within Paul Berlin's fantasy, then, Sarkin Aung Wan becomes the embodiment of this wish. We first encounter her early on in Paul Berlin's fantasy trek up and out of Vietnam. As Berlin imagines it, she too is fleeing the country. She is, as she comes to explain, a refugee fleeing to the "Far West" (50) and all that implies. In this respect, she recalls the "Factual Epilogue" with which Lederer and Burdick drive home their point in *The Ugly American*:

> All over Asia we have found that the basic American ethic is revered and honored and imitated when possible. (285)

The proposition O'brien seems to be examining through the relationship between Sarkin Aung Wan and Paul Berlin is, why don't the Vietnamese like and embrace us the way people of so many other cultures have?

As a refugee headed for the "Far West," Sarkin Aung Wan is poised between two cultures, the one she has opted for, with its distinctly Western commitment to the freedom and dignity of the individual, and the more associative Eastern one, with its emphasis upon community and commitment to the group. (I am aware, of course, that some have lately begun to disparage this oversimplified dichotomy as "Orientalism." But the point is that O'Brien obviously believes there is some validity to it, and ample evidence exists to suggest that our opponents in Vietnam were certainly able to promote and exploit it, whether it was literally true or not.) Sarkin's first function, after joining Paul Berlin's group, for instance, is to establish the Vietnam War as essentially a cultural contest. This takes place in "A Hole in the Road to Paris," the title of the chapter introducing quite possibly the most important episode in Paul Berlin's fantasy trek.

I don't have time to rehearse all the particulars of Berlin's richly detailed fantasy. Suffice it to say that the platoon literally does fall into a hole in the road, tumbling down into a vast VC tunnel system. Following one of the tunnels, they come to an elaborate underground command center equipped with sophisticated electronic and optical equipment and manned by a lonely, hospitable VC major named Li Van Hgoc.

This VC tunnel interlude, of course, serves to examine the cultural preconceptions out of which it is fashioned, as well as to introduce O'Brien's larger fictional strategy in the novel. At the center of the scene, both metaphorically and dramatically, is a periscope through which Li Van Hgoc allows Paul Berlin to reexamine one of his most frightening memories of the war in fact, the way in which a fellow soldier was shot by the unseen enemy in attempting to search a tunnel. As Berlin's guide and host observes at the end of this reminiscence:

> "So you see," said Li Van Hgoc as he brought down the periscope and locked it with a silver key, "things may be viewed from many angles. From down below, or from inside out, you often discover entirely new understandings." (82)

The insight Berlin eventually gains by viewing his experience "from down below" and by turning it "inside out" (82) is his discovery of the inadequacy and inconsistency of the cultural models out of which he fashions his fantasy, and the entirely new understanding at which he arrives is a new-found appreciation for Vietnam as a cultural contest. In the midst of their visit, for instance, Paul Berlin, who had never seen the living enemy, seizes the opportunity to ask about the secret of the enemy's success:

> How, he asked Li Van Hgoc, did they hide themselves? How did they maintain such quiet? Where did they sleep, how did they melt into the land? Who were they? What motivated them—ideology, history, tradition, religion, politics, fear, discipline? Why did the earth glow red? . . . Was it true they didn't value human life? . . . . Why was the land so scary—the crisscrossed paddies, the tunnels and burial mounds, thick hedges and poverty and fear? (77)

The land, Li Van Hgoc affirms, holds the key to the mystery: "The soldier is but the representative of the land. This relationship, Li Van Hgoc goes on to explain, is symbolized in an ancient ideograph—the word Xa. Significantly, however, he must look to Sarkin Aung Wan, as cultural intermediary, for help in translating the ideograph: "Community," Sarkin Aung Wan interprets. "It means community, and soil, and home" (77). And as a helpful Li Van Hgoc goes on to expound:

> "Yes, but it also has other meanings: earth and sky and even sacredness. *Xa*, it has many implications. But at heart it means that a man's spirit is in the land, where his ancestors rest and where the rice grows. The land is your enemy." (77)

The "implications" of which Li Van Hgoc speaks are nothing less than the totality of the traditional associative Vietnamese culture, which draws its strength and solidarity from this pastoral vision of a simple life lived in harmony with the "land." This is the central defining myth of Vietnamese culture, and the first new understanding at which Berlin arrives is how the force of that myth has rendered his country ironically impotent.

Berlin dramatizes this insight in a tense confrontation between the platoon's Lieutenant Corson and Li Van Hgoc over when and how his American "guests" may leave. He politely refuses to show the Americans the way out because, as he explains, they are now his "prisoners of war" (83), and the following exchange ensues:

> "Of course," Corson said gently, "we do have you outmanned."
>
> "Of course," nodded Li Van Hgoc.
>
> "Outmanned, not to mention outgunned."
>
> "Again, sir, that is a clear piece in the overall puzzle."
>
> "Outmanned, outgunned, and outtechnologized." Lieutenant Corson tapped his forefinger against the weapon's plastic stock.
>
> "Well spoken," the enemy said. "A neat summary of the issues. Very well spoken." (84)

This exchange is neatly emblematic of our Vietnam impasse—which, as O'Brien realizes, derived from our own cultural inability to see that not every problem admits a technological or military solution.

As suggested by his tapping on his M-16's plastic stock, Lieutenant Corson belongs to the generation that simply couldn't accept the irrelevance of American technical and military might in Vietnam. He tries to force a response out of the VC major by leading his men in laying waste to the Viet Cong command center and all its equipment. In the end, however, Li Van Hgoc is forced to admit that he too doesn't know the way out of this symbolic tunnel complex, ultimately a metaphor for America's directionless involvement in the war. "Don't you see? Don't you see that's the whole *point*?" an

exasperated Li Van Hgoc insists. "No way out. That is the puzzle. We are prisoners, all of us. POWs." (87)

"The land . . . a prisoner of war, caught by the land" (88), Paul Berlin muses, speaking for himself no less than Li Van Hgoc. As O'Brien effectively dramatizes, the combatants on both sides are in effect "caught" by their lands in the largest sense of the term. They are too deeply mired in their own cultures to appreciate each other's point of view.

In keeping with the cultural contest O'Brien is symbolizing here, fittingly, Sarkin Aung Wan breaks the impasse. "The way in is the way out," she offers. "We have fallen into a hole. Now we must fall out." (88) In articulating this paradox, Sarkin Aung Wan is not, as the VC major charges, uttering "riddles" and "mystic nonsense" (88). Li Van Hgoc speaks for the position of cultural accommodation, arguing that "the land cannot be beaten" and preferring his "few livable chambers in hell" (87) to the anomie and alienation of desertion. But as a cultural refugee fleeing to the "Far West" (50), and asserting the individualism that implies, Sarkin Aung Wan stands for anything but compromise. "We have fallen into a hole," she reminds the platoon. "Now we must *fall out* (88).

Falling in and out of this particular hole on the road to Paris is finally nothing more than the actualization of the old familiar military metaphor: To "fall out" is to leave a troop formation. O'Brien, again, is not simply being arbitrary in having Sarkin Aung Wan lead the platoon out of the underground maze—in effect, away from the war. (They emerge no longer in Laos, but in Mandalay.) Following Sarkin's lead, the platoon does not so much "fall out" as it drops out in pursuit of its own "separate peace."

Paul Berlin's fantasy trek from this point forward in effect becomes a brilliantly extended metaphor (one almost allegorical in its implications) designed to test the proposition that an ordinary person, given the conditions of modern mass society, can realistically drop out—or opt out—of an unpopular war. Paul Berlin, O'Brien wants us to see, is not just a "prisoner of war," imprisoned within his own culture; he is also, in his attitudes, values, reactions, and imaginative projections, the sum of that culture's parts.

Despite a number of horrific events recreated or alluded to in *Going After Cacciato*, the dominant tone is a bittersweet nostalgia for *The Ugly American*'s lost vision of America as the redeemer nation. Thematically, the most significant tension in the novel arises from the reluctance of O'Brien's characters to let go of this ideal completely, for to do so would be to cut themselves off finally from the America in which they grew up. As Doc, in a passage that speaks far beyond the context, expresses this residual faith: "the principle was sound. You can't bitch about the basic theory" (91). And as Paul Berlin himself, late in his fantasy, rationalizes his own failure to dissociate himself from either the platoon or the war:

> Even in Vietnam—wasn't the intent to restrain forces of incivility? The *intent*. Wasn't it to impede tyranny, aggression, repression? To promote some vision of goodness? (247)

Accordingly, for Paul Berlin, the "only truly shameful memory" is not the fragging of his lieutenant, but the one aspect of our search and destroy strategy that put the lie to this benevolent vision of liberation, the indiscriminate frisking of the people and the wholesale ransacking of their homes (124-125). To quote from Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War*—another Vietnam text that shares in *The Ugly American*'s cultural legacy—we had become "those bullying Redcoats who used to barge into American homes during our Revolution" (88). To give Lederer and Burdick their due, then, it is not so much that O'Brien rejects their prophetic view of Vietnam as he brings it full circle, back to its source—our vision of ourselves as the redeemer nation. As O'Brien fully seems to appreciate, harking back to the novel's evocation of *xa*, we finally lost in Vietnam because, where the other side's popular culture still held the power to unite and inspire their people to great sacrifice, we had long since grown cynical and jaded about our great myths. To borrow O'Brien's key metaphor, Lederer and Burdick themselves had perhaps been innocent, well-intentioned "prisoners" of the Cold War (88). They had helped pave our road to Hell with their good intentions. But given the tenor of the times, they could hardly be blamed for failing to see that our ostensible enemies in Vietnam were already involved in, to use Lederer and Burdick's phrase, a "quest for the dignity of freedom" (285) on their own terms. That failing, O'Brien seems to be insisting, is more to be pitied than censured, bringing me to my final point—just how should we read *Going After Cacciato*?

In my estimation, the reason that this novel is destined to last is mainly because O'Brien has managed to avoid the sentimentality and self-indulgence that unfortunately mark so much of Vietnam literature. The war itself to O'Brien, as his narrator remarks of Cacciato, simply represents "a waste among infinitely wider wastes" (7)—not an apocalyptic event. (Those familiar with the novel, of course, have only to think of the devastatingly ironic confrontation with the San Diego State dropout to appreciate how O'Brien's surrealism derives from a tough-minded realism toward the war in fact.) In terms of its theme and tone, *Going After Cacciato* is finally reminiscent of the "irony and pity" (Hemingway 113) we associate with modernism, not the poststructuralist paranoia and despair we associate with postmodernism. The thematic wisdom O'Brien espouses, and the message of his novel, is that we are indeed all prisoners of war, "caught by the land" (88). But even more to the point, O'Brien is affirming, as his old lieutenant observes at the end of the novel, in lines that speak far beyond their context, "There's worse things can happen. There's plenty of worse things" (301).

Works Cited

Beidler, Philip. D. *Re-Writing America: Vietnam Authors in Their Generation*. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P,

1991.
Caputo, Philip. *A Rumor of War*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977.
Fields, Annie, ed. *Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Detroit: Gale, 1970.
Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York: ,Oxford UP, 1975.
Hellmann, John. *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam*. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.
Hemingway, Ernest. *The Sun Also Rises*. 1926. New York: ,Scribner's, 1954.
Lederer, William J., and Eugene Burdick. *The Ugly American*. New York: Norton, 1958.
O'Brien, Tim. *Going After Cacciato*. 1978. New York: Delta, 1989.

INTRODUCING W. D. EHRHART'S *BUSTED: A VIETNAM VETERAN IN NIXON'S AMERICA*

H. Bruce Franklin, English Department, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ 07102.

Among the hundreds of authors whose works I have assigned in dozens of courses at American public and private universities since 1961, I have never seen one have the same impact as W. D. Ehrhart. I have not even heard about any other author having the kind of effect I have witnessed.

In 1981 I began teaching a course called "Vietnam and America" at Rutgers University in Newark, an urban branch campus of New Jersey's state university attended mainly by working-class students. Two of the books that always seemed to generate enthusiastic responses were *Carrying the Darkness: The Poetry of the Vietnam War*, the splendid anthology edited by Ehrhart, and *Passing Time* (originally published as *Marking Time*), the second of his extraordinary autobiographical memoirs. So each year I used some of the modest funds available for lecturers to have Ehrhart come to the class to read some of his poems and discuss the war. But in 1993, when funds for lecturers disappeared (thanks to the financial crisis crippling public higher education), I was unable to invite him or any of the other Vietnam veteran authors who had generously shared their time with previous classes. When I walked into the classroom on the day *Passing Time* was due, there was a strange hubbub. One very bright, articulate, and conservative young man, who had attended a military school and was planning to be a career military officer—and who had been arguing vociferously with me all semester—seemed especially upset. Suddenly he blurted out: "I've never read a book like this. It's changing my whole life." The next thing I knew, he was up in front of the class saying, "We've got to have this guy come talk with us. Why don't we kick in to get whatever it takes to bring him." There was a chorus of assent. Someone called out from the back, "Let's each put in five dollars." Someone else yelled, "Five dollars? It costs seven fifty just to see a movie." "O.K.," said a new voice, "let's make it ten dollars." And so most of these students, almost all of whom work at least part time to be able to afford tuition, contributed ten dollars apiece to get a visit from W. D. Ehrhart.

When Ehrhart came, the student who had led this spontaneous movement made the introduction and then handed him the bundle of cash. In characteristic style, Ehrhart said later that this money meant more to him than any he had ever received in his life. His lecture was, as always, electrifying, and he had to be almost literally torn away from students still hanging on his every word over an hour after the class officially ended.

This was one of the most thrilling experiences I have had in my decades as a teacher. But it was also puzzling. For if these working-class students, a heterogenous mix

of America's urban and suburban ethnic groups, responded with such fervor to Ehrhart's writing, why were his books not selling in the hundreds of thousands? These were no elite or coterie readers, but ordinary Americans representing a vast potential audience. Ehrhart's relative obscurity on America's literary landscape could hardly be explained by any loss of interest in the Vietnam War and the literature generated by it. Literature by Vietnam veterans has been especially honored and well received: Larry Heinemann's *Paco's Story* won the National Book Award in 1987. Robert Olen Butler's *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* received the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. The 1994 Pulitzer Prize for poetry went to Yusef Komunyakaa. David Rabe's plays have won the Obie Award, Drama Desk Award, Drama Guild Award, and New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War* has sold over a million copies. Ron Kovic's 1976 autobiography *Born on the Fourth of July* went through numerous printings even before Oliver Stone translated it into the 1989 hit movie—though it is worth noting that some scenes in the film (such as the college sequence) seem based more directly on Ehrhart's *Passing Time* than on anything in Kovic's powerful book in the same genre.

Among those who professionally study and teach Vietnam War literature, Ehrhart is admired at least as much as any of these justly celebrated writers. Some consider him the preeminent figure in this literature—treasured for his nonfiction, enormously influential as the foremost anthologist of Vietnam War poetry, and himself unsurpassed as a poet. A few days after the lecture sponsored by my students, I attended a major three-day conference, "The United States and Viet Nam: From War to Peace" held at Notre Dame in early December 1993. Among the dozens of sessions, plenaries, talks, and readings, including Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award winners, one and only one presentation received a standing ovation: a poetry reading by W. D. Ehrhart. This is surely an example of unequivocal peer recognition.

Ehrhart does have a following, one that is devoted, enthusiastic, and steadily growing. His poems are gradually finding their way into literature anthologies. The profundity of his prose is becoming recognized. But why is he not a household name among the serious reading public?

Part of the problem may be Ehrhart himself. Some of the very qualities that make him such a potent writer—his passion, searing honesty, and scorn for greed, duplicity, pettifogging, selfishness, bureaucracy, and the self-serving ethos of the corporate world—make him an inept businessman, particularly unsuited for success in these tough times for serious authors in the U.S. publishing industry. Not one of his four previous books of nonfiction has had an appropriate publisher or been published in the trade format required for attention in the major review media. They have appeared only as mass-market paperbacks (a form rarely reviewed) or as publications of McFarland & Co., a very good but tiny niche publisher of specialized reference texts. McFarland licensed his first nonfiction book, *Vietnam-Perkasie*, to a mass-market house, which put it out as a paperback aimed at the thrill-seeking readers of survivalist military adventure stories. With the kind of irony appropriate to Ehrhart's career, the cover pictured him as a gung-ho Marine "toting an M-16 in the jungles of Vietnam" in front of a billowing U.S. flag. But the main explanation of Ehrhart's relative obscurity lies elsewhere.

Vietnam-Perkasie: A Combat Marine Memoir actually is basic to understanding Ehrhart's life and the trajectory of his succeeding three autobiographical memoirs: *Passing Time: Memoir of a Vietnam Veteran Against the War*; *Going Back: An Ex-Marine Returns to Vietnam*; and the present volume. It is a stunning chronicle of how a red-white-and-blue American boy from the model American small town—"where people left their homes unlocked at night" and "carolers strolled from house to house on Christmas Eve"—is transformed by the Vietnam War into a human powderkeg filled with an explosive mixture of rage and guilt and shame about himself and his country. This is the book that gives the most complete account of Ehrhart's experience in the war itself, opening with his physical wounding in the ferocious 1968 battle to retake the city of Hue and closing with scenes back in the United States that dramatize his psychological wounding. The main narrative is an extended flashback that takes him from his upbringing in that idyllic Pennsylvania town of Perkasie and his ultra-patriotic enlistment in the U.S. Marines at age 17 through boot camp, the nightmare of discovering his identity as an unwanted invader, a murderer, and an instrument of imperial policy in Vietnam, and his return to an America that has become for him an alien place. This is a familiar story in the literature by Vietnam veterans, similar to that told as brutally realistic autobiography in Kovic's *Born on the Fourth of July*, as the sometimes surreal fiction of Tim O'Brien and Larry Heinemann, or as interstellar science fiction in Haldeman's *The Forever War*. *Vietnam-Perkasie* features one characteristic of Ehrhart's writing that distinguishes it from most, though not all, literature by Vietnam veterans (or anybody else)—he reveals things about his own actions that very few of us are brave enough to disclose. As he relentlessly probes the moral significance of these actions in Vietnam, moreover, he begins to display their historical significance. This leads to what is most distinctive about *Vietnam-Perkasie*, Ehrhart's ability to shape the autobiographical memoir into his own recognizable brand of vehicle for exploring history through personal experience.

Even as a high-school student, Ehrhart was committed to the belief in a crucial relationship between American history and the role of each individual American. It was this belief that led him in 1964 at the age of sixteen to ride around Perkasie on the back of a flatbed truck "singing Barry Goldwater campaign songs" for he was "fed up with Lyndon Johnson and his refusal to stand up to the communists in Vietnam." *Vietnam-Perkasie* reprints his 1965 high-school editorial filled with detailed historical arguments supporting the U.S. role in the Vietnam War and concluding with this rebuke to those who say that Americans are "dying for no good reason" in Vietnam: "What more noble a cause can a man

die for, than to die in defense of freedom?" A few days after writing this, he decided to enlist in the Marines so that he could fight in Vietnam to defend freedom and his country.

By describing in undiluted detail what he actually experienced in Vietnam, *Vietnam-Perkasie* presents the raw materials from which Ehrhart was to fashion most of his early poems. Like many other Vietnam veteran poets, he developed a strikingly plain style, remarkable for its concision and avoidance of the mannerisms that have made "poetry" seem like a coterie activity. For example, in the sixty-five words that constitute the poem "Guerrilla War," Ehrhart dramatizes the basic facts of life for U.S. ground troops in Vietnam, facts that demolish the entire argument of his patriotic high-school editorial:

> It's practically impossible
> to tell civilians
> from the Vietcong.
>
> Nobody wears uniforms.
> They all talk
> the same language,
> (and you couldn't understand them
> even if they didn't).
>
> They tape grenades
> inside their clothes,
> and carry satchel charges
> in their market baskets.
>
> Even their women fight;
> and young boys,
> and girls.
>
> It's practically impossible
> to tell civilians
> from the Vietcong;
>
> after a while,
> you quit trying.

If one had to choose a single brief text to teach the history of the U.S. war in Vietnam, could one do better than Ehrhart's "A Relative Thing"?:

> We are the ones you sent to fight a war
> you didn't know a thing about.
>
> It didn't take us long to realize
> the only land that we controlled
> was covered by the bottoms of our boots.
>
> When the newsmen said that naval ships
> had shelled a VC staging point,
> we saw a breastless woman
> and her stillborn child.
>
> We laughed at old men stumbling
> in the dust in frenzied terror
> to avoid our three-ton trucks.
>
> We fought outnumbered in Hue City
> while the ARVN soldiers looted bodies
> in the safety of the rear.
> The cookies from the wives of Local 104
> did not soften our awareness.
>
> We have seen the pacified supporters
> of the Saigon government
> sitting in their jampacked cardboard towns,
> their wasted hands placed limply in their laps,
> their empty bellies waiting for the rice
> some district chief has sold
> for profit to the Vietcong.
>
> We have been Democracy on Zippo raids,
> burning houses to the ground,
> driving eager amtracs through new-sown fields.
>
> We are the ones who have to live
> with the memory that we were the instruments
> of your pigeon-breasted fantasies.
> We are inextricable accomplices
> in this travesty of dreams:
> but we are not alone.
>
> We are the ones you sent to fight a war
> you did not know a thing about—
> those of us that lived
> have tried to tell you what went wrong.
> Now you think you do not have to listen.
>
> Just because we will not fit
> into the uniforms of photographs
> of you at twenty-one
> does not mean you can disown us.
>
> We are your sons, America,
> and you cannot change that.
> When you awake,
> we will still be here.

The qualities that characterize *Vietnam-Perkasie* and his poetry—the distinctive flat voice speaking in a deceptively plain style, the painful honesty and insights, the visceral power, the rare fusion of personal and historical vision—also drive his later prose narratives and make them identifiable as uniquely his own. On the surface, each narrative seems fairly straightforward, but closer inspection reveals that Ehrhart is following the classic dictum that the greatest art lies in the concealment of art.

This, I think, is why *Passing Time* hits my students so hard. There seem to be no aesthetic pretensions here, just the apparently simple story of how an idealistic gung-ho seventeen-year-old joins the Marines, fights in Vietnam, returns to an alien America, and then goes through a series of ever more devastating discoveries about himself and the war. Published in 1986, the narrative begins and ends in 1974 with Ehrhart, a lowly engineroom seaman on an oil tanker, playing casino with an engineer named Roger. The story seems loosely constructed, returning intermittently to these card-playing scenes, with Roger serving as interlocutor, audience, and foil for Ehrhart, who believes he is burnt out but who is really smoldering and rumbling like a dormant volcano ready to blow its top. Actually there are four narrative frameworks. First is the 1986 book itself, a construct of its thirty-eight-year-old author. Inside this is the enclosing narrative, the 1974 tanker episodes about the twenty-

five-year-old Ehrhart. Within this unthreatening framework, Ehrhart recounts his excruciating discoveries as a veteran in the critical years beginning in 1969. The narrative of those five years serves as a third container, through which his most traumatic experience, that in Vietnam, bursts through as flashbacks. Emphasizing his own naivete and ignorance, Ehrhart the narrator successfully conceals until late in the book Ehrhart the author's relentless engagement with history, which is woven into the camouflaged intricacies of the narrative with covert subtlety and sophistication.

The most crucial scene comes during the 1970 invasion of Cambodia when Ehrhart, now a Swarthmore student, broods by himself instead of going with his girlfriend Pam to a campus antiwar meeting and then, in a guilt-ridden rage, brutally punches her when she returns. As she "lay there staring up at me with a look of abject, naked, raw terror in her eyes," the narrator confronts a hideous truth about himself:

> Oh, God almighty, what have I done? Here it was, here it was at last: Pam's eyes were the same eyes I'd seen in a thousand faces in a hundred villages, staring up at me in mute hatred as I towered over her, my whole body still cocked, ready to explode again. And this time there was no rifle, no uniform, no Sergeant Taggart barking orders, no mines, no snipers, no grenade ready to explode, no juggernaut momentum of a vast military bureaucracy out of control and bogged down in human quicksand, not a single excuse with which to defend myself.
>
> So this is what you are, I thought.

Although he begs forgiveness, Pam expels him from her room, and he drinks himself into oblivion. When he awakes late the next afternoon, it is to a voice on the radio: "students wounded, at least four killed." He finds a newspaper headlined "Four Students killed at Kent State":

> One of the photographs accompanying the article showed a line of national guardsman on the crest of a low hill. Another showed a young woman kneeling on the ground, her mouth twisted open in a scream, her face contorted with rage and anguish and shocked disbelief, her eyes swollen with tears, her arms outstretched toward the corpse of a man lying facedown in a pool of blood.
>
> It was a photograph of Pam. Pam! And look there! Among the soldiers! That's me! The third one on the left! No!

After crying uncontrollably "until there was nothing left inside," he says that "my mind was more lucid than it had ever been before." The scene is so poignant and painfully revelatory that it is easy to miss the complex mixture of insights and illusions—both personal and historical—of its concluding words:

> And then I knew. It was time—long past time—to put aside excuses and pride and vain illusions. Time to forget all that was irretrievably lost. Time to face up to the hard, cold, utterly bitter truth I'd tried to avoid for nearly three years. The war was a horrible mistake, and my beloved country was dying because of it. America was bleeding to death in the ricefields and jungles of Vietnam, and now the blood flowed in our own streets.
>
> I did not want my country to die.
>
> I had to do something.
>
> It was time to stop the war.
>
> And I would have to do it.

The author's awareness of his narrator's self-deception comes across most clearly in the tragicomic final line, where the movie-inspired heroic self-image and idealistic patriotism that had motivated Ehrhart the high-schooler to volunteer to win the war now persuades Ehrhart the veteran that he should and can stop the war. John Wayne will now be a lone hero for peace. As the narrator goes on, he is forced to confront his personal limits and the illusions of his male ego. But far more agonizing are his confrontations with historical illusions and deception.

"The war was a horrible mistake," Ehrhart concludes amid his brutalization of Pam and the killings at Kent State. If my students are at all representative, many readers at this point get taken in. Because the scene is so painfully revelatory, we are not tempted to question the accuracy of this conclusion. Besides, in the 1980s and 1990s we are now supposed to believe that this was the essence of the antiwar position: "The war was a horrible mistake." Widely promulgated in the form of the "quagmire" metaphor developed by David Halberstam, it has become a kind of orthodoxy, offered as the liberal alternative to the right-wing view of the Vietnam War as—to use Ronald Reagan's phrase—"a noble cause." But unlike his narrator in 1970, the author of *Passing Time* does not believe that the Vietnam War was a "mistake," and he is tricking us into sharing his 1970 view in order to shatter it more effectively.

One year (and twenty chapters) later, Ehrhart—like millions of other Americans in 1971—encounters the *Pentagon Papers*, unassailable proof that the war was no "mistake," no "quagmire" into which America's leaders had unwittingly stumbled, but the product of elaborate secret plans and byzantine official deceit:

> A mistake? Vietnam a mistake? My God, it had been a calculated, deliberate attempt to hammer the world by brute force into the shape perceived by vain, duplicitous power brokers. And the depths to which they had sunk, dragging us all down with them, were almost unfathomable.

Passing Time then condenses with terrific concision the core of the *Pentagon Papers*, the U.S. government's top-secret history of its war against Vietnam, as the outraged responses of the young man who had mistakenly thought he had lost all his illusions a year earlier. "Here were," as the narrator puts it, in "the government's own account": Colonel Edward Lansdale's sabotage teams, infiltrated into Vietnam "even before the 1954 Geneva accords"; the creation of the U.S. puppet dictatorship of Ngo Dinh Diem; the Eisenhower administration's prevention of free elections; the secret dispatch of combat units by the Kennedy administration in 1961; the "U.S. government's

direct connivance in the overthrow of Diem"; "the secret commando raids against North Vietnam"; "the plans for bombing the north more than a year before they were executed, the power brokers waiting, waiting for the chance, the excuse, some pretext the American people would believe"; "the evidence that the years of negotiations and temporary bombing halts had been no more than public-relations ploys designed to dupe the American people into supporting the ever-increasing escalation of the war" right on through 1971. The *Pentagon Papers* demonstrate to Ehrhart that the war from the beginning had been planned and executed by "a pack of dissembling criminals who'd defined morality as whatever they could get away with," "a bunch of cold-blooded murdering liars in three-piece suits and uniforms with stars" who "sent the children of the gullible halfway around the world to wage war on a nation of peasant rice farmers and fisherpeople." Like the American nation as a whole, Ehrhart had wanted to believe that the war was a "mistake," for the alternative, now forced upon him, is far more horrifying to face:

> I'd been a fool, ignorant and naive. A sucker. For such men, I had become a murderer. . . . For such men, I had been willing to lay down my life. And I had been nothing more to them than a hired gun, a triggerman, a stooge, a tool to be used and discarded, an insignificant statistic. Even as the years since I'd left Vietnam had passed, even as the doubts had grown, I had never imagined that the truth could be so ugly.

Reading passages like this, one realizes that Ehrhart's relative obscurity is not merely—or primarily—a product of his lack of business acumen or his bad luck in publication. As Ehrhart is acutely aware, the message at the heart of his poetry and prose is one that the "power brokers" certainly do not want the nation now to hear or remember. Because men like these control corporate publishing and the major media, one would have to be a bit naive to expect Ehrhart's works to be widely ballyhooed.

Busted: A Vietnam Veteran in Nixon's America, which picks up where *Passing Time* left off, is immediately recognizable as an Ehrhart narrative: it is about an all-American guilt-ridden Marine Vietnam veteran discovering through brutally honest confrontation with himself devastating insights into the society that produced him; its surfaces seem simple and straightforward enough; it's a page turner. A reader familiar with *Passing Time* can detect right away some of Ehrhart's characteristically sly strategies for weaving history into the story, especially the outraged and enraged narrator battering his friends with his insights while their rejoinders highlight his quixotism. Ehrhart puts some of the sharpest insights into his own foibles and follies in the mouths of others, especially lawyer Richards, who tells the narrator, "Sometimes I think you want to make your life as hard as you can . . . . If you can't find something to be angry about, you just keep pushing until you do." But there is more going on here than meets the eye, for *Busted* is more artistically complex than any of Ehrhart's earlier narratives. Indeed, the title itself has more meanings than a New Critic could find in a metaphysical poem.

On one level, this is a simple story of how the narrator got "busted" for possession of marijuana while working as a seaman, how this busted his life, and how in an *Alice-in-Wonderland* trial he busted the attempt to take away his seaman's card. The triviality of his offense and of the trial itself is played off against the real crimes that have busted the narrator's identity: "I'm guilty, all right. I'm guilty of murder, attempted murder, arson, assault and battery, aggravated assault, assault with a deadly weapon, robbery, burglary, larceny." These are crimes that he believes he committed in Vietnam, crimes for which he was given medals by the same government that is now persecuting him for possession of a small amount of pot. From these contradictions Ehrhart spins a complex web of relations between the narrator's experiences in Vietnam and in America, before and after. *Busted* also features a second major character, who, although he never appears in person, lurks everywhere as the nemesis of the narrator: Richard Nixon.

As the narrator's ludicrous little trial is put off and on again over a period of months, President Nixon is simultaneously becoming ever more entangled in the Watergate web and thus being exposed as a far more dangerous criminal than the narrator. The parallels become increasingly ironic until, on the very day when the narrator is acquitted of the pot possession charge, Nixon, having been busted from the White House, is pardoned by Gerald Ford, his appointed successor, of any and all crimes he may have committed while President.

This ingenious structuring produces continual flashes of insight, like lightning bolts between oppositely charged bodies. Ehrhart's most audacious innovation, however, lies in still another dimension, added by the presence of "ghosts" of three friends killed in Vietnam. Combining elements of chorus, interlocutor, conscience, and dark comedy, the voices of the dead end up having the final words of the narrative. These words are, ironically, the most optimistic in *Busted*, and they leave the narrator pointing forward to his future life as the artist who will design the work the ghosts inhabit. *Busted* thus concludes as a kind of non-fictional *bildungsroman*, or portrait of the artist as young man discovering the life determined for him by being busted.

Ehrhart here uses to great advantage that wonderful ability to condense history and unobtrusively display its relevance to everyday life. The book weaves in a pithy history not just of the Vietnam War and the Nixon saga but also of the revealing relations between the legalization of alcohol and criminalization of marijuana. The immense fissures fracturing American society during the early 1970s, symbolized in the Nixon saga and the pot trial, are dramatized in the confrontations between Vietnam veterans and the forces of law and order, especially in several scenes where the narrator is busted by gun-wielding cops for the crime of his counterculture appearance.

Because of its tricky narrative structure and daring use of ghosts, *Busted* may not please all admirers of

Ehrhart's earlier prose works and may be more susceptible to misinterpretation. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating and original work that offers new evidence of what an important contemporary American author we are privileged to have in W. D. Ehrhart.

As this introduction was being drafted, *Busted* took on added significance with the death of Richard Nixon and his resurrection as a "genius" of foreign policy who "inherited the Vietnam War in 1968" (in the words of several AP stories and numerous editorials in the last week of April 1994) and successfully negotiated its end, as we were informed by a media blitz. His tombstone reads: "Richard Nixon, 1913-1994. The greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker."

The truth, which informs *Busted* as well as *Passing Time* and many of Ehrhart's poems, is that Richard Nixon as Vice President was one of the principal architects of the Vietnam War, and that as President he conspired for four years to keep the war going, finally ending it in 1973 on terms that were less favorable to Washington than those offered by his Vietnamese opponents in early 1969. In April 1954, before the fall of Dien Bien Phu and before the opening of the Geneva conference that ended the French war against Vietnam, Vice-President Nixon publicly declared that because "the Vietnamese lack the ability to conduct a war by themselves or govern themselves," in the event of a French withdrawal "the Administration must face up to the situation and dispatch forces." Within two months, as Ehrhart later learned from the *Pentagon Papers*, the Eisenhower-Nixon Administration had set up the Diem dictatorship and dispatched the first U.S. covert-action teams.

W. D. Ehrhart was then six years old. He had no way of knowing that the U.S. war in Vietnam had begun, much less the role it was to play in his life. Nor was Richard Nixon aware of the existence of Bill Ehrhart or how their lives would intersect.

When the men in the White House and the Pentagon made the decision to send Americans to fight in Vietnam, they probably never gave a thought to the literature that might be produced by the U.S. veterans of what we now call the Vietnam War. How would these men have responded if someone had whispered in their ears that this literature would constitute one of the few great American achievements of that war? Or that maybe, someday, this literature will help us recognize the difference between a Richard Nixon and a Bill Ehrhart, that is, the difference between a warmaker and a peacemaker?

H. Bruce Franklin is the John Cotton Dana Professor of English and American Studies at Rutgers University, Newark. He is the author or editor of sixteen books on cultural history, including ***M.I.A. Or Mythmaking in America.*** *He is now finishing an anthology,* ***The Vietnam War in American Stories, Songs, and Poems,*** *which will be published by Bedford Books in January 1996.* This essay appears as the Introduction to ***Busted***, published by the University of Massachusetts Press in the Spring of 1995.

Poetry by R.S. Carlson

D.I.

Don't call me "Sir."
I'm a sergeant.
I'm no ninety-day-wonder butter-bar
waiting to turn nineteen and ship out.
Call me "Sergeant."
Do you understand me, Trainees?
Yes, Sergeant!
I can't hear you!
Yes, Sergeant!

For the next sixty days
you belong to me alone.
I am your mama, your daddy,
your priest, your rabbi,
your guru and your God.
Do you understand me, Trainees?
Yes, Sergeant!
I can't hear you, girls!
Yes, Sergeant!

I will teach you everything you need to know.
I will teach you how to make your bunk.
I will teach you how to fold your socks.
I will teach you how to disassemble
and reassemble your weapon in the dark.
I will teach you how to clean your weapon.
I will teach you how to fire your weapon.
Do you understand me, Trainees?
Yes, Sergeant!

You will learn in the next sixty days
to live with your weapon night and day
because, if you don't, six months from now
most of you poor bastards will come home early
sucking the inside of a body bag.
Do you understand me, Trainees?
Yes, Sergeant!
I can't hear you!
Yes, Sergeant!

With that established, know this.
You will do what I say
when and where and how I say to do it,
no more, no less.
Screw up, and you give me push-ups.
You will assume the front leaning rest position
whenever I say to do so.
You can forget about your wife and your girlfriend,
'cause Jody back home is humping them both
while I have you here humping Mother Earth.
Do you understand me, Trainees?
Yes, Sergeant!

Very good. You are learning already.
Do you call me 'Sir?'
No, Sergeant!
All right. Follow my orders
and I'll make soldiers of you.
Do you know why I'm going to
make soldiers out of you?
Is it because I'm your mama now?
I'm a tough S.O.B. on the outside
with a soft spot in my heart for you?
Yes, Sergeant!

Sheeit. You maggots are dumber than I thought.
I ask for men to train,
they give me dogshit.
Let me tell you why I'll make soldiers of you.
I've already pulled two tours in Nam.
I've already got my share of Charlie's shrapnel
blasted into my legs.
So if I can make you ballerinas understand
which end of a rifle to point at Charlie
in the next sixty days,
I won't have to go back there again myself.
Do you understand me, Trainees?
Yes, Sergeant!

Good. You pencil-pushing college pansies
plan on learning to fight.
And you back-stabbing street punks
plan on learning to fight
when and how the army says to
Do you understand me, Trainees?
Yes, Sergeant!

You better hope and pray you understand me,
you miserable bunch of cheap pussies.
I will put you through your manual of arms.
I will put you through morning runs and night marches.
I will walk you in circles through tear gas.
I will walk you through barbed wire.
I will crawl you through mud.
I will crawl you under machinegun fire.
And you will do it all for me
because you want to be good soldiers, right?
Yes, Sergeant!

You lying pack of turds!
We all know you're gonna do it
because you're more afraid of me
than you are of death itself.
And if you aren't yet,
I shall change that directly.
Do you understand me now?
Yes, Sergeant!

Screw up on me and, like I said,
you do push ups.
Screw up too often,
you get extra KP instead of a PX pass.
Get wise and try to skip out on me,
and you get a thirty-day vacation
in the post stockade.
Then, when they recycle you back to me,
you'll wish you were dead.
Do you understand me?
Yes, Sergeant!

All right. It is now
thirteen-fifty-five hours.
At exactly fourteen hundred hours
I will enter the platoon bay
to teach you how to make a bunk.
If every swinging dick in this platoon
is not standing at attention
at the foot of his rack
when my boot clears the door,
you will all give me fifty push-ups.
Do you understand me, Trainees?
Yes, Sergeant!

We'll see. *Platoon, ten-hut!*
Fall out!
Up those stairs double time!
Move! Move! Move! Move! Move!

(1968)

R.S. Carlson, English Department, Azusa Pacific University, 901 East Alosta, PO Box A.P.U., Azusa, CA 91702-9982.

The Vietnamese Marine Corps

Peter Brush, 8 Morrison Ave., Plattsburgh, NY 12901.

The Vietnamese Marine Corps had its origin during the period of French control in Indochina. The 1949 Franco-Vietnamese Agreement stated that the Vietnamese Armed Forces were to include naval forces whose organization and training would be provided by the French Navy. In 1951, a development plan was proposed by the French for the Vietnamese Navy, which called for the formation of two naval assault divisions under French command. In March, 1952, French Imperial Ordinance No. 2 was promulgated, officially establishing the Navy of Vietnam. The following year the two naval assault divisions were activated.

In 1953, the French and Vietnamese governments agreed to increase the Vietnamese Army to 57 light infantry battalions for offensive operations. As such operations were to extend into the coastal areas of Vietnam, an increase in the size of the Vietnamese Navy was also deemed necessary. While considerations were underway to decide if the river flotillas should be under the control of the Army or Navy, French Vice Admiral Auboyneau proposed for the first time the organization of a Vietnamese Marine Corps. By 1954, as the French began their withdrawal from Vietnam, the Vietnamese Marine Corps, a component of the Vietnamese Navy, consisted of a headquarters, four river companies, and one battalion landing force.[1]

On October 13, 1954, President Ngo Dinh Diem signed a government decree formally creating within the naval establishment a corps of infantry to be designated as the Marine Corps (VNMC). The cessation of hostilities between the French and Vietnamese caused the end of U.S. military assistance to the French in Indochina. Title to materiel previously provided to the French in Vietnam reverted back to American control. Also during that year the U.S. and French military missions to Vietnam were combined into the Advisory, Training, and Operations Mission (ATOM).

In 1955, the Vietnamese Naval Forces passed from French to Vietnamese command. In January, 1955, U.S. ATOM members proposed missions for the Vietnamese Navy and Marine Corps that included light amphibious operations, river and coastal patrol, minesweeping, fire support, and logistic support for military forces. The ATOM proposal envisioned that by 1957 the Vietnamese Marine Corps was to be increased in size to a three battalion regiment. It would constitute a portion of a general reserve for the Vietnamese armed forces, and would be available for rapid deployment throughout the national territory of Vietnam. French insistence that infantry units should be part of a naval force and operate from boat units was one of the most important tactical innovations to emerge from the First Indochina War. Although French in origin, all further evolution of the VNMC would be at the hands of the U.S. Marine Corps.

In 1954, U.S. Marine Lieutenant Colonel Victor Croizat was designated as the first Senior U.S. Advisor to the VNMC. These first Vietnamese Marines were formed from colonial-era commandos (the 1st and 2nd Battaillons de Marche) who came south when Vietnam was partitioned at Geneva.[2] Vietnamese Marines were recruited as volunteers and attended recruit training at the VNMC Training Command located at Thu Duc near Saigon. The recruit program placed emphasis on patriotism, challenging "young men to prove themselves equal to rigorous, disciplined life."[3] Officers in the Vietnamese Marine Corps were appointed from the National Military Academy, an infantry school for reserve officers, and from a 12-week officer training course for NCO's showing special merit. The training center could accommodate 2,000 students and provided advanced infantry training, officer, NCO, and sniper courses in addition to basic recruit training. Many training command instructors had received instruction at Marine Corps schools in the United States.[4]

USMC advisory efforts permeated every aspect of VNMC training, force expansion, logistics, and field operations. When Croizat arrived, VNMC strength stood at 1,150 men and were dispersed from Hue to the Mekong Delta. It was dependent upon the French for logistical support, and a French officer still commanded the 1st VNMC Battalion.[5] The VNMC earned a solid reputation as a fighting force, particularly compared to the regular armed forces of South Vietnam (ARVN). The VNMC, along with Ranger and Airborne units, constituted Saigon's elite national reserve, and were deployed to exploit battlefield successes and redress emergency situations. Normally the individual Marine battalions were attached to a corps, a province, or an ARVN division for combat operations.

In 1958, the Vietnamese Marines were among the first South Vietnamese government (GVN) regular military units committed to fighting the Viet Cong—the 1st VNMC Landing Battalion was ordered into action by the South Vietnamese (SVN) Joint General Staff (JGS) at the end of the year. The battalion spent two months searching for VC in An Xugen, Vietnam's southernmost province. Adhering to then prevailing U.S. policy, no U.S. Marine advisors accompanied the Vietnamese Marines on this operation.

In 1959 the VNMC underwent expansion. The month of June saw the formation of a third landing battalion near the Cuu Long Navy Yard. A fourth rifle company was added to each infantry battalion and the old heavy weapons companies were abolished. These changes increased the strength of VNMC infantry battalions to about 900 men.[6] It was at this time that the VNMC, along with newly formed ARVN airborne units, became the general reserve for the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). This "force in readiness" was directly responsible to the JGS for any ground warfare mission. As part of this general reserve the VNMC often was assigned to clear particularly hazardous or difficult terrain while seeking combat with the Viet Cong.

U.S. Marine advisors sought to transform the VNMC into an elite fighting unit, encouraging them to take pride in difficult and dangerous operations. The senior USMC advisor proposed the adoption of a distinctive globe and

anchor emblem (similar to that of the USMC) as well as a black and green tiger-stripe camouflaged utility uniform similar to that worn by French commando units. A dark green beret was authorized for wear in garrison. At this time the U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG) authorized U.S. Marine advisors assigned to the VNMC to accompany them into combat, a privilege that was not extended to other MAAG personnel.[7] These American Marine advisors wore the same distinctive field uniform as their Vietnamese counterparts.

In 1960, Major Le Nguyen Khang was appointed Senior Marine Officer by President Diem. In November, 1960, the VNMC 3d Battalion became involved in an coup against the Diem government. Upon learning of this coup attempt, Khang led two VNMC battalions from the field to Saigon where they joined other Marine units around the presidential palace. For several hours it appeared that Khang's Marines might clash with the rebellious Marines of the 3d Battalion. After the coup was suppressed by forces loyal to Diem, the VNMC returned to their combat functions with the general reserve. In 1961 the VNMC was expanded by the addition of a fourth infantry battalion and a 75mm howitzer battery. The 4th Battalion was organized in the coastal city of Vung Tau, about 60 kilometers southeast of Saigon. While these new units were forming, the JGS ordered the Vietnamese Navy and Marines to undergo operations against Viet Cong forces in the U Minh Forest at the southern tip of South Vietnam. These particular GVN units were deployed because the objective was not accessible by land. This operation made evident the deficiencies of Vietnamese naval forces. Inexperienced sailors had difficulties with navigation which caused them to arrive late at the embarkation point. The Marines, relying on outdated French maps, made slow progress moving inland. The result was little contact with the Viet Cong.

Similar problems plagued most GVN ground units in this early period of operations against Communist forces. The frequent deployment of the VNMC units in static security roles was opposed by their U.S. Marine advisors as running contrary to the offensively-oriented, elite spirit they sought to instill in the VNMC. In spite of this opposition, the JGS continued to station their Marine units in areas around the capital.

1964 ended in diaster for the Vietnamese Marine Corps. The 4th Battalion had been serving as the reserve force for III Corps. On December 27, the Viet Cong overran the town of Binh Gia east of Saigon. ARVN Rangers and the 4th VNMC Battalion were ordered to retake the town. This was accomplished with no enemy opposition. While attempting to recover the bodies of dead U.S. Army gunship crewmen, a company of Marines was ambushed by a Viet Cong force armed with heavy weapons. The other three companies of the 4th Battalion moved from Binh Gia toward the crash site to lend assistance. This Marine column was ambushed by a large Communist force while moving through a rubber plantation. By late afternoon most of the officers of the 4th Battalion were dead, including the battalion commander. Before eluding the Viet Cong attackers the 4th Battalion suffered about 60 percent casualties. All the U.S. Marine advisors were wounded in the fighting at Binh Gia. The Ranger Battalion, operating nearby, suffered a similar fate in another violent ambush. Within a 24-hour period two elite government battalions had been destroyed.[8]

The fighting at Binh Gia was the worst defeat of the war to date for the VNMC, causing the elimination of its 4th Battalion as an effective fighting force. USMC Major Lane Rogers, advisor to the 3d VNMC Battalion, volunteered to go to Binh Gia to assist with evacuation of the casualties. After three days of searching, over 100 allied bodies were recovered. No VC bodies were found.[9]

Although no one within the allied command knew the exact size of the enemy force that had defeated the Vietnamese Marines at Binh Gia, it certainly was larger than any enemy force previously encountered. Later MACV learned that the Communists had created the 9th VC Division from two regiments. The South Vietnamese Joint General Staff ordered a joint Airborne and Marine task force to search out and destroy the Communist division. The resulting operation, which ended in February, was unsuccessful; no VC were located.

The VNMC did achieve success against the VC the following month. Intelligence sources indicated one VC battalion from the 2d VC Regiment was in the town of Bong Song in II Corps. Another VC battalion had been positioned along the highway to ambush any GVN relief column. After a ten mile forced march, the VNMC attacked the flank of the VC ambush position. With the arrival of darkness the VC disengaged, leaving behind 63 KIA.[10] In March, the 2d VNMC Battalion was awarded a U.S. Presidential Unit Citation for actions against the Viet Cong. In August, a VNMC task force fought its first battle with North Vietnamese forces operating in South Vietnam near the Special Forces camp at Duc Co near the Cambodian border. VNMC combat effectiveness and morale increased after mid-1965, as evidenced by a declining desertion rate. In November, the 3d VNMC Battalion engaged in an amphibious landing from U.S. 7th Fleet ships with elements of the U.S. Marine Corps. 1965 also saw the expansion of the VNMC with the formation and deployment to operational status of the 5th Battalion.

During June, 1966, Colonel John A. MacNeil, head of the U.S. Marine Advisory Unit, submitted a plan concerning force structure goals for the Vietnamese Marine Corps to Rear Admiral Norvell G. Ward, commander of the American Naval Advisory Group. MacNeil's plan envisioned the enlargement of the VNMC from a brigade to a full division by 1970.

In 1966, the VNMC continued to operate as a segment of the general strategic reserve. Its commandant, Lieutenant General Le Nguyen Khang, in addition to his Corps duties, served as military governor of Saigon and commander of III Corps. General Khang was the first VNMC graduate of the USMC Amphibious Warfare School at Quantico, Virginia (many VNMC field-grade officers later graduated AWS). One VNMC battalion remained in the Saigon area while the others were deployed throughout South Vietnam.

In May, the GVN sent two battalions of Marines (without their U.S. advisors) to assist in the suppression of political dissent associated with the Struggle Movement in Da Nang and Hue. A VNMC task force continued to operate in I Corps for the remainder of 1966. VNMC units supported USMC forces in Operation Hastings in Quang Tri province and with the 5th Marines during Operation Colorado in the Que Son Valley near Tam Ky. In September, a sixth infantry battalion was added to the VNMC.

Normally the national strategic reserve remains uncommitted except as dictated by tactical emergency. Even though the VNMC was an element of the GVN reserve it seldom remained uncommitted: In 1967, Vietnamese Marines engaged in combat operations over 80 percent of the time.[11]

Except for the VNMC battalion based at Vung Tau, the battalions of the VNMC were based around Saigon. Marine operations in 1967 frequently included security operations in the Capital Military District, combat operations in the Rung Sat Special Zone, campaigns against VC forces in II Corps, and search and destroy operations in III and IV Corps. The VNMC added an artillery battalion to its existing six infantry battalions during the year.

The Rung Sat ("forest of assassins") is a 400 square mile dense mangrove swamp separating Saigon from the South China Sea. The range between high and low tides is 12 feet, yielding rapid currents that make small streams dangerous for troop movements. Boats are difficult to maneuver during tidal periods and at high tide it is impossible for troops to maneuver on foot. The VC employed a system that utilized signal towers to provide early warning on the massing of GVN units. During 1967, the VNMC conducted five battalion-sized operations in this hot, wet, dangerous, and insect-infested environment.

Binh Dinh province in northern II Corps was an area of major VNMC operations throughout 1967. Joint U.S./GVN operations began shortly after the arrival of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) in 1965. Binh Dinh province consisted of a heavily-populated coastal plain with large uncultivated and under-populated areas away from the coast. All except the coastal areas had long served as VC sanctuaries and Communist influence was strong. The main food cultivation areas were located along Route 1 which were under government control. It was the VC's desire to seize these food-producing areas that led to the deployment of U.S. and GVN forces in Binh Dinh province. VNMC operations in II Corps during 1967 resulted in 202 Communists KIA and 282 captured. Marine losses during the year in II Corp were 49 KIA and 215 WIA.[12]

In February and March, 1967, the VNMC provided a brigade that underwent joint operations during Operation Junction City with the U.S. 25th Infantry Division in III Corps. In May, Marine units deployed to the Mekong Delta to participate in riverine operations with the ARVN 21st Division. Other VNMC operations during 1967 included Operation Billings with the U.S. 1st Infantry Division near Bien Hoa and Operation Paddington with the Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy province. The most productive Vietnamese Marine operations of 1967 occurred in the fall when the 5th VNMC Battalion served as a maneuver battalion for the U.S. Navy Mobile Riverine Force. This battalion generally moved on the boats of the Riverine Assault Division. The fierce two-day battle of Rach Ruong resulted in the deaths of 175 Viet Cong at the hands of the 5th Battalion, including the commander of the VC 502d Battalion, one company commander, and two platoon commanders.[13] The VNMC engaged in 24 major combat operations during 1967, more than half of which were multi-battalion maneuvers, and resulting in the death or capture of approximately 1,000 enemy soldiers.[14]

Although by the time of the Tet Offensive of 1968 South Vietnam had known over twenty years of revolutionary warfare, the capital of Saigon had been spared the ravages of war. That came to an end on January 31. As a component of the general reserve, the VNMC was quickly committed to the fighting. By the morning of the first day of the offensive two battalions of Vietnamese Marines were rushed by helicopter from the Mekong Delta to Saigon. Deploying on the parade ground of the JGS, the VNMC units engaged Viet Cong forces for twenty-four hours before the Communist forces there were repulsed.

In the north, beginning about 3:30 A.M., a mixed NVA-VC force swept into the former imperial capital of Hue. By dawn these invaders had control of the city except for the U.S. advisory compound and the ARVN 1st Division camp in a corner of the Citadel. On February 12, two battalions of Vietnamese Marines moved into the southwestern corner of the Citadel, adjacent to U.S. Marines occupying positions in the southeastern corner. The fighting between ARVN, American, and Vietnamese Marines on one hand, and North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers on the other, swayed back and forth for the next ten days. At 5:00 A.M. the Viet Cong banner which had flown over the citadel since the fighting began was replaced with the flag of South Vietnam. The twenty-five day struggle for Hue was the longest and bloodiest ground action of the Tet Offensive and possibly the longest and bloodiest single action of the Second Indochina War.[15]

The Tet fighting of 1968 made evident the reluctance of many ARVN units to aggressively pursue enemy forces after overcoming their initial attacks. Too often these units were concerned with their own safety and the well-being of their dependents, and their commanders relied on the aggressiveness of U.S. military units and American firepower to push enemy units out of urban areas. Exceptions to the tendency of GVN military units to prefer the defense of their bases rather than seeking the enemy in the countryside included elite GVN forces such as the Vietnamese Marines, Rangers, and Airborne units, who performed well in the fighting in Hue.[16]

At the beginning of 1969, 47 USMC officers and nine enlisted men were assigned to duty as advisors with the VNMC. Normally, two USMC advisors were assigned to each VNMC infantry battalion. VNMC strength in 1969 totaled 9,300 officers and men.[17]

In February 1969, the VNMC engaged in joint operations with the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) near the

Cambodian border. This forty day operation yielded one of the largest caches of enemy arms and ammunition of the war. Tons of captured supplies were transferred by CH-47 helicopter from the Parrot's Beak area to the VNMC support base near An Loc. Later that month the VNMC 5th Battalion engaged elements of the 5th NVA Division near Bien Hoa. In fighting that was so close it precluded the use of artillery support, the Vietnamese Marines claimed over 150 NVA killed in action, including an NVA battalion commander. For this action the 5th VNMC Battalion was awarded the U.S. Navy Unit Commendation.

During April a second artillery battalion was added to the Vietnamese Marines. In November, a third artillery battalion was formed; the following month, a seventh infantry battalion was authorized.

In April and May Vietnamese Marines underwent amphibious, riverine, and reconnaissance operations with ARVN and U.S. Navy River Assault forces in areas including the Cau Mau Peninsula and the U Minh Forest. During the summer a Vietnamese Marine brigade conducted reconnaissance-in-force operations with Vietnamese territorial units in Chuong Thien Province before being placed back in general reserve status. 1969 year's end saw the VNMC engaged in heavy combat in III and IV Corps.

In May, 1970, a VNMC brigade consisting of three infantry battalions plus a battery of artillery participated in the GVN incursion into Cambodia. At the end of May this brigade engaged in a six-day period of intense combat, including house-to-house fighting, against the North Vietnamese forces near the town of Neak Luong. 295 NVA were killed, while VNMC casualties totaled only seven KIA.[18] As U.S. Marine advisors were not permitted to accompany their Vietnamese counterparts, the Cambodian fighting was an important test of the ability of the VNMC to operate independently. Contact between VNMC and NVA forces continued until June 16.

In the summer of 1970, the Vietnamese Marines deployed northward into Quang Nam province, establishing fire support bases southwest of An Hoa Combat Base. In 1971, the VNMC underwent its first division-sized operation when it moved to the vicinity of the old Marine Corps combat base at Khe Sanh in Quang Tri province. Operation Lam Son 719, the GVN invasion of Laos, was one of the most important GVN operations of the war.

The purpose of Lam Son 719 was to sever the Ho Chi Minh trail at the Laotian city of Tchepone, thereby thwarting an anticipated NVA offensive and facilitating the redeployment of U.S. combat units during 1971. Two VNMC brigades entered Laos in March by helicopter insertion and overland movement. Their purpose was to occupy firebases that had been abandoned by the 1st ARVN Division. Beginning about March 18, Vietnamese Marines operating from Fire Support Base (FSB) Delta in Laos faced heavy concentrations of NVA forces. Enemy heavy artillery, mortar, and small arms fire brought airborne resupply and medical evacuation operations to a near standstill. On March 21, the NVA launched sustained regimental-sized attacks against the besieged Vietnamese Marine defenders at FSB Delta. The Communist weapons included tanks equipped with flame throwers. After NVA forces penetrated the perimeter of FSB Delta the Marines were ordered to withdraw. Eventually the VNMC units, tasked with blunting the NVA counter-offensive, fought their way back into South Vietnam. The Marine division as a whole claimed over 2,000 NVA KIA while suffering approximately 1,000 KIA and WIA. The Vietnamese Marines were the last GVN troops to leave Laos during this operation.[19]

The results of Lam Son 719 made evident serious command and control weaknesses within the GVN armed forces. Artillery support had been deficient. Personal politics between GVN commanders had a negative effect on tactical operations. The Vietnamese Marines had made the best of a difficult situation, however. A senior U.S. Marine advisor noted that the VNMC alone among the GVN Airborne, Rangers, and regular ARVN divisions achieved local battle successes and maintained their unit integrity.[20]

After 1968, the VNMC contained three brigade headquarters with the designations Marine Brigades 147, 258, and 369. These designations originally came from the numerical designations of the battalions under their control. After April, 1971, two brigades were operating in Quang Tri province while the third remained in Saigon. Many senior VNMC officers had been fighting the Communists for twenty years and often perceived little need for American advisors. Consequently, these U.S. Marines frequently felt more like fire support coordinators rather than advisors. These senior VNMC commanders were Northerners by birth and referred to their enemy as either Communists or Viet Cong, but never as "NVA" or "PAVN" (People's Army of Vietnam).

By 1971, South Vietnam had a peaceful appearance to it—few Marines felt the need to wear flak jackets or helmets and rarely carried a loaded magazine in their weapons.[21] In November, 1971, U.S. Marines in I Corps celebrated the birthday of the Corps with their Vietnamese counterparts. Birthday cakes were flown up from Saigon and washed down with large quantities of beer. The quiet and calm tactical situation allowed the regular rotation of the VNMC battalions in the north to Saigon, where the families of the Marines were located. After a period of leave, the rotated battalion participated in training exercises.

With the withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Vietnam, much USMC equipment was turned over to the Vietnamese Marines. In 1972 one of the goals of the Marine advisory unit was aimed at fostering a greater sense of solidarity between the VNMC and Vietnamese Navy in order to create an efficient amphibious assault organization.

The tranquility in I Corps ceased near year's end. On December 21, the 5th VNMC battalion, newly arrived to replace the 4th, received more incoming enemy fire in one day than the 4th had received all fall. Enemy activity continued to increase in January and February of 1972. The NVA had organized a corps-level headquarters to carry out attacks against South Vietnam's Military Region 1 (MR1), the northernmost military region in the

country, in order to challenge the U.S. policy of Vietnamization. The two VNMC brigades, 147 and 258, were deployed along the western portion of GVN defenses below the DMZ. Brigade 369 was deployed into the area to conduct mobile clearing operations. On March 30, 1972, the NVA fired 12,000 rocket, artillery, and mortar rounds all across the Quang Tri frontier, preparing the way for a force of 25,000 North Vietnamese soldiers supported by tanks and artillery. The outgunned 3d ARVN Division, responsible for the defense of the DMZ region, reeled under the attack. In just two days the NVA had overrun all twelve of the bases and outposts that U.S. Marines had turned over to the 3d ARVN.[22] VNMC Brigade 258 was moved northward to reinforce the crumbling ARVN defensive line and assume security of the vital Dong Ha region. The commander of the 3d VNMC Battalion, Major Le Ba Binh, broadcast on his command radio network that there were "Vietnamese Marines in Dong Ha. We will fight in Dong Ha. We will die in Dong Ha. We will not leave. As long as one Marine draws a breath, Dong Ha will belong to us."[23]

Major Binh's promise proved impossible to keep—the South Vietnamese were outnumbered three-to-one by the invading North Vietnamese. However, along with ARVN Airborne units, the Vietnamese Marines fought a savage series of delaying actions which finally stopped the NVA offensive north of Hue, and then counterattacked. U.S. Marine advisors never left the side of the Vietnamese Marine Division. Heavy fighting continued into June, with the Marines pushing back into Quang Tri province.

At the beginning of August most of Quang Tri City remained in NVA hands and it had become apparent that the ARVN Airborne Division, weakened by earlier fighting in the Central Highlands, would be unable to dislodge the NVA defenders. The Marine Division was given this mission and relieved the ARVN airborne troops. As September began, Marine units had been in constant street fighting for 35 days under steady enemy artillery attacks. On September 9 the Marines began their final assault. Shortly after noon on September 16, Vietnamese Marines raised the flag of the Republic of Vietnam over the Quang Tri Citadel. During the seven week battle to recapture Quang Tri City, the VNMC had suffered 3,658 casualties. This figure represented approximately 25 percent of the entire Vietnamese Marine Corps.[24]

Following the NVA 1972 offensive, the Vietnamese Marine Division remained in the northernmost part of MR1. Here it faced three North Vietnamese divisions. The VNMC maintained aggressive long-range reconnaissance patrols into NVA-held territory in northern and western Quang Tri province. In March, 1973, the U.S. Marine advisory unit was deactivated. After repelling a battalion-sized attack in September, enemy activity in the north fell off except for sporadic mortar attacks on VNMC positions. A 4th brigade was added to the VNMC in December, 1974.

During March, 1975, the Vietnamese Marines were deployed south from Quang Tri to provide for the defense of Danang. By April the GVN began to collapse in the face of the NVA final offensive. ARVN units in Danang disintegrated and only the Marine brigades maintained tactical integrity. For two days the Marines engaged in an attempt to defend the city, fighting the North Vietnamese near VNMC headquarters at Bo Tu Linh west of Danang. When this proved futile, they deployed aboard evacuation ships. Now split into two forces, during the GVN's final hours Vietnamese Marines were reported fighting NVA forces near the presidential palace in Saigon.

Less than 250 Vietnamese Marines ultimately escaped to the U.S. after the fall of Saigon. This group included their two commandants, twenty officers, and 180 enlisted men who ended up in refugee camps in the U.S. For one last time, American Marines who had served as advisors to the Vietnamese Marines were on hand to assist them.[25]

The special relationship between the Vietnamese and American Marines was summed up best by the last VNMC Commandant. According to General Khang, U.S. Marines never tried to command their Vietnamese comrades; rather, they served with them as friends and advisors. U.S. Marine advisors frequently worked outside their military fields to provide assistance to VNMC wives and children. American Marines were the only ones to share the food of the Vietnamese Marines—they did not carry their own rations into the field. Instead, they ate food procured in local markets and from individual farmers according to the methods of the Vietnamese Marines. The American Marines made no distinction between the U.S. Marines and the Vietnamese Marines.26

Notes:

1 The best source for information on the early years of the Vietnamese Marine Corps is Victor J. Croizat, "Vietnamese Naval Forces: Origin of the Species," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, (February, 1973): 48-58.

2 Major Charles D. Melson and Lieutenant Colonel Curtis G. Arnold, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1971-1973*, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1991): 23n.

3 Quoted in Graham A. Cosmas and Lieutenant Colonel Terrance P. Murray, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1970-1971*, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1986): 370.

4 *Ibid.*: 370.

5 G. H. Turley, *The Easter Offensive: Vietnam, 1972*, (New York: Warner, 1985): 7.

6 Captain Robert H. Whitlow, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1954-1964*, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1977): 32.

7 *Ibid.*: 35.

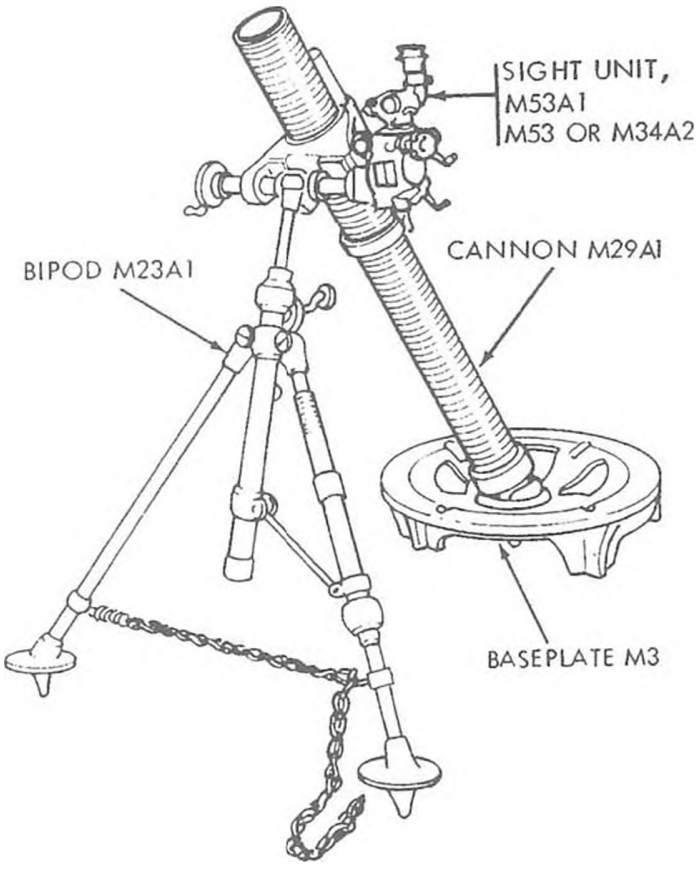
8 *Ibid.*: 138.

9 Jack Shulimson and Major Charles M. Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1965*, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1978): 204-205.

10 *Ibid.*: 206.

11 Major Gary L. Telfer, Lieutenant Colonel Lane Rogers, V. Keith Fleming, Jr., *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1967*, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1984): 248.

[12] *Ibid.*: 251.
[13] *Ibid.*: 253-254.
[14] *Ibid.*: 254.
[15] Don Oberdorfer, *Tet!*, (N.Y.: Avon, 1971): 219.
[16] Jeffrey J. Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years, 1965-1973*, (Washington, D.C.:Center for Military History, United States Army, 1988): 325, 327.
[17] Charles R. Smith, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1969*, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1988): 311.
[18] Cosmas: 373.
[19] Keith W. Nolan, *Into Laos*, (Novato, CA: Presido, 1986): 344. Cosmas: 378.
[20] Cosmas: 377.
[21] Melson: 24.
[22] Melson: 38; Turley: 145.
[23] John G. Miller, *The Bridge at Dong Ha*, (N.Y.: Dell, 1990): 80.
[24] Melson: 126.
[25] Turley: 305.
[26] Quoted in Smith, 1969: 313. Also Melson: 26.



Poetry by Pete Lee

destination

a today like this
morning a she
like you following long

sickness a beach
with the word "neck"
in its name the sun

breaking the will
of all disease
the bus stop

ping we pile out
two stunned words
well now.

true north

when you arrive
at the bottom
of your hometown
on a cloudy night

the lights of your
neighbors' houses
are the only
stars you've got

your compass
the barking of
sleepless dogs:
north north north

head tunes loop tic-like

"sorry so sorry please
accept apology" (segues into)
"when least expect it...
smile..." & once again am
shotgunning mudhens along
Owens River, or smacking
first wife around

lost

not 200 feet over
our desert town
a good 20 miles
from their flyway
a V of Canada geese
honks and veers
this way and that

I'm pulling for them
but it doesn't matter
they become a broken
necklace of black dots
against the sun
rising out of Death
Valley... just as a

fellow desert rat
rattles past in
a decrepit Pontiac
with a message etched
in the dust coating
the dinged-up trunk lid:
honk if you're lost

off the record

my suicide will
be unofficial

the Pope will not
bless my suicide

no ribbons
will be cut
only veins

the initial shovel-
ful of earth
will be upon
completion

and the first
stone laid will
be the last.

the once-white/carpet

the once-white
carpet in this room
resembles the
beige stucco ceiling
more every day

I lie in suspense

between the two
on this convertible
sofa like some beefcake
centerfold (yellowing
around the edges)

parallel universes
that's what we are
but unless I
open the door
none of us expands

to whom it may concern

motorcycle parked outside
inside, "a place for my stuff"
my backpack and bird books
my walking stick, broken
down, with one piece barring the
front window and one piece
barring the bathroom window
a thing with a two-burner range
and a sink built into its top
and a fridge taking up the
space below that my ex-
ercise machine pushed against
the wall one chair I use
and one I don't a bed with
six layers of covers on it,
three feet from the air conditioner
an old gas heater I'm afraid
will blow up and kill me this winter
a thin carpet with cigarette holes,
too the obligatory brick-and-
board bookshelf new poems coming
out the wazoo whoever you are,
I'm prepared to be lonely for you now.

we know how it ends

our love is a scene
from *Das Boot*

two sweaty faces grimace
in black & white

stripped to our waists
in the deathly quiet

cars with their depth charges
cruise by outside

our absent spouses shine
in our narrowed eyes

none of the major stars
have been hurt yet but

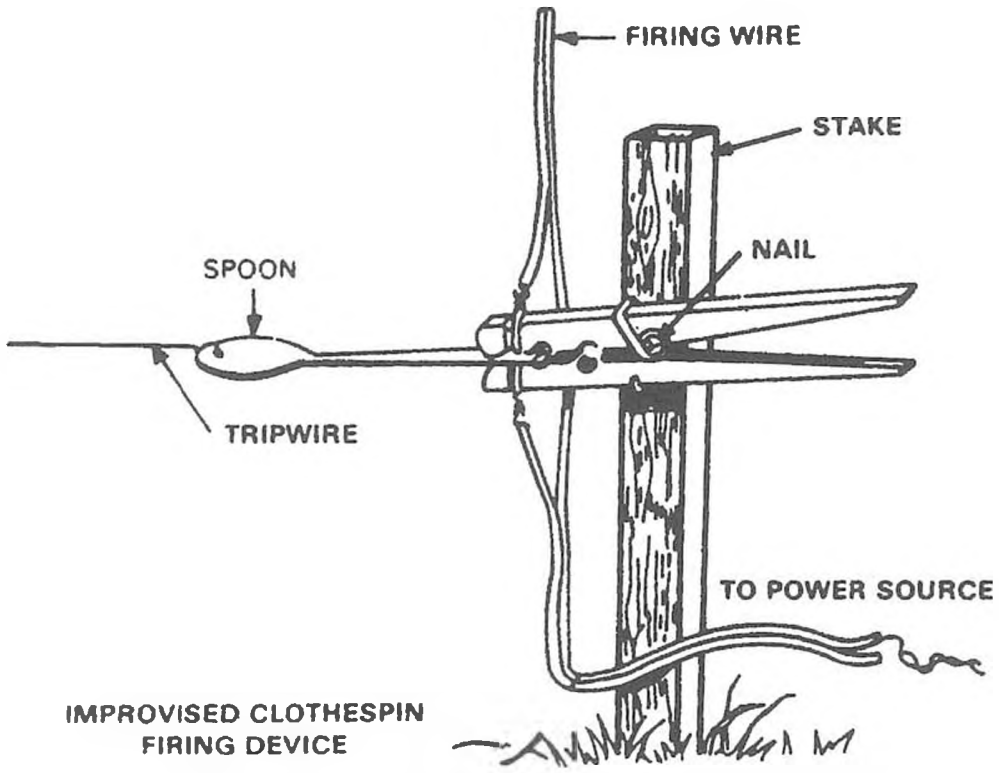
one false move
& we're all screwed.

Pete Lee, 706 N. Balsam Ave., #8, Ridgecrest, CA 93555. Lee is a former U.S. Army sergeant/counter-intelligence agent who later served in a civilian capacity as an intelligence operations specialist with the Department of the Army. He subsequently worked as a private investigator in Hawaii and is now working in an unemployment office in California. He's an avid bird-watcher and has hiked just about every trail in the southeastern Sierra Nevada range. He's had a couple hundred poems published in literary journals in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain.

Poetry by Dave Medlinsky

San Diego

His tactic with women
in the bars and lounges
was to pretend he
couldn't talk, that
he lost his voice
in Vietnam, shot
speechless. The
reverse of all talk
and no action,
the matches lit
like flares while
he penned his responses,
his booth in the dark
aglow for hours.
He'd tell me about
it afterwards, all
that she'd say
and he didn't
how they'd drive
to her place through
the one-way streets,
locked into everything
but conversation.



IMPROVISED CLOTHESPIN
FIRING DEVICE

X-mas Leave, 1966

Cigarette in my
mouth like a compass,
nineteen, on leave
of my senses,
I feared nothing but
some loss of latitude,
that change of climate.
Soon the goodbyes:
raising up my
relatives like newborn,
little nieces to
their ceiling, my
mother off the ground
like a saint, the
entire family defying
their accustomed gravity.
But in the cold,
I was content
to pour my breath
into the blue
cup of my hands,
to stand alone
as the statue
in the park,
the stone soldier
charging the night
without thought,
the days without feeling.

Basic Training

Thinking the songs
on the radio
were about us,
we listened hard
to the words,
thought we understood
this is a man's
world, and that
a rock feels
no pain. In bunks
we slept
like we marched:
in perfect rows,
our nights parallel
to our days,
our adolescent parade
finally at rest.
Disassembling
our hard profession
of arms, we
stiffened our resolve
to survive the war
that played softly
in the background,
music from some
neighboring barracks
that refused the
order to lights out,
fighting soldiers
from the sky,
the lyrics
to a lie. But
eventually they,
too, slept, unfolded inside
the hospital folds
their unspent lives,
unknowing
as you get,
peaceful as can be.

Dave Medlinsky, Oakland, CA. Dave Medlinsky is a *graduate of UCLA, and later attended San Francisco State to study Creative Writing. Currently, he is the placement director as Los Medanos College, where he also teaches part time. Some of his earlier work has appeared in* ***Spectrum***, ***Roanoke Review***, *and other college journals, as well as such small presses as Cafe Review, and Iconoclast.*

"I WAS *EVOLVING*": DISSENT AS MORAL DEATH, CAPITULATION AS MATURITY IN *RETURN OF THE SECAUCUS 7, THE BIG CHILL* AND *GRAND CANYON*

Kim Worthy, 221 Bay 11 St., Brooklyn, NY 11228.

The 1980s ended with Reagan's successor, George Bush, in the White House and, coincidentally, a number of Sixties countercultural leaders, including Michael Harrington, I.F. Stone, Abbie Hoffmann and Huey Newton, in their graves. These deaths as the Nineties began were inevitably symbolic, as popular acceptance of conservative politics in this country swelled and that of the left diminished. Bush lost his position to a man referred to ironically by one lefty journalist as "a draft-dodging, dope-toking Don Juan." But although Clinton may have seemed like the torch-bearer of the Sixties, another leftist writer warned that "the two-party consensus was and is the problem in the first place." One might reasonably assume that both in the Eighties and the Nineties, massive late-Sixties-style protest in America has indeed been, as Herbert Marcuse might say, digested by the status quo as part of its healthy diet. Among the ways popular culture has contributed to this digestion was writer/director Larry Kasdan's reformulation of Sixties activism in two films, The Big Chill in 1983, and Grand Canyon, nine years later.[1] While examining the degree to which Kasdan eased the way for neo-conservatism in the guise of idealism, it is also necessary to examine how well John Sayles' *Return of the Secaucus 7*, the 1980 film on which *The Big Chill* was based, truly represented popular protest.

The terminology of reviewers of Sayles' *Secaucus 7* and Kasden's *The Big Chill* and *Grand Canyon* implies a widespread belief that the transition from Vietnam era protest to early Eighties conformity and to Nineties "political economy," has been simply an expression of the maturing process. I argue that by naturalizing the change from activism to dutiful capitalism, and upscale professionalism, and finally, to a new paternalism toward the urban underclass, The Big Chill and Grand Canyon betray the ideals of the protest generation. My article mainly analyzes the two earlier films in the context of active protest against the Viet Nam war and against social injustice.

So far as I can tell, Larry Kasdan and co-writer Barbara Benedek have never publicly acknowledged their debt to John Sayles in utilizing Sayles' characters from *Return of the Secaucus 7* (1980) in their *The Big Chill* (1983). The concept of a reunion of white, middle-class characters with what may be called "Sixties traits" originated in Sayles' film. Such traits are portrayed through the occupations and attitudes of each set of characters.

Kasdan's and Benedek's debt to Sayles is widely known. The *Variety* reviewer Todd McCarthy regarded *Secaucus 7* as *The Big Chill*'s "obvious predecessor."[2] Vincent Canby termed *The Big Chill* "a somewhat fancy variation" on *Secaucus 7*.[3] Stanley Kauffmann cited *Secaucus 7* as the most prominent "antecedent" of *The Big Chill* (along with European group films and group plays dating to the 1930s).[4] And Pauline Kael in her review of *Big Chill* recalled *Secaucus 7* as "similar" but with "an unslick tone."[5]

While reviewers were correct to report the later film to be a variation on the earlier, their comments on the subject matter of the two movies often ran together in a manner that is misleading. Kael maintained that while *Big Chill* belied advance publicity which had produced an expectation the film would be a serious one, its characters could be described as "activists... who became the kind of people they used to insult."[6] This description might appear to imply that *Secaucus 7*, being a "similar" film, is equally concerned with activists who sold out. Likewise, Kauffmann, who calls B*ig Chill*'s subject "a group of refugees from the 1960s... a collection of sellouts and compromisers—doggedly defiant or cynically craven," appears to label as comparable sellouts the characters in *Secaucus 7*, as *Big Chill*'s "antecedent." The same is true of McCarthy, in saying the later film is about "the ideals of youth vs. the realities of adult life."

David Denby, writing in *New York Magazine*, wrote that *Secaucus 7* deals with how much trouble "even the most determined reformers" have "living up to their ideals."[7] And Canby considered that like the *Secaucus 7*'s Sixties survivors, those of *The Big Chill* "all seem to have climbed higher in the Seventies, so that their sense of dreams lost and ideals betrayed is sharper and, possibly, more romantically dramatic" than those of the *Secaucus 7* characters—a statement which strongly suggests *Secaucus 7* also focuses upon "dreams lost and ideals betrayed."[8]

McCarthy's opposites, "the ideals of youth vs. the realities of adult life," and to a lesser degree the terminology of other reviewers of *The Big Chill*, seem to indicate that both the real-life transition from late Sixties protest to early Eighties conformity and that of the fictional worlds of the two films were moves to maturity. Kael observed that, "Anyone who believes himself to have been a revolutionary or a deeply committed radical during his student-demonstration days in the late Sixties is likely to find [Big Chill] despicable." One source of this kind of response is the feeling that, by naturalizing the change from activist to traditional parent, dutiful capitalist, and upscale professional, *The Big Chill* itself betrays the most noble ideals of the protest generation.

Are both *The Big Chill* and *Secaucus 7* about lost dreams? Or does *Big Chill* alone naturalize (and therefore sanction) the metamorphosis of the *Secaucus 7* characters into Yuppies? Is *Secaucus 7* a film which rightfully, through the codes, conventions and ideology of Sixties radicals, defends such people for their enduring commitment in the Eighties? Does the later film disfigure, and subtly and skillfully repress, the traits which in *Secaucus 7* signal Sixties ideals? Is *The Big Chill* (through the film's writers) accordingly an outright co-optation by the status quo?

Certainly in *Big Chill* the *Secaucus 7* characters are greatly changed. In fact, the mutations of characters from

Secaucus 7 to *Big Chill* are crammed with so much nostalgic information about the Sixties and so many cultural signals from the Eighties, a trivia past-time tracing them could be marketed to Sixties-protest alumnae, were they not so damning of the integrity of those among them who might have the leisure to trivialize.

Mike, Katie, J.T., Frances, Irene, Maura, and Jeff of *Secaucus 7* become *The Big Chill*'s Harold, Sarah, Karen, Michael, Nick, Meg, and Sam. Mike is a high school history teacher; his Chill counterpart, Harold owns twenty-eight shoe stores. Katie teaches high school English and Frances is an altruistic resident intern; Sarah is a doctor in private practice. Maura is a former VISTA worker who has just broken up with Jeff and doesn't know what she's going to do; Karen , Maura's update, is a former amateur poet and now the bored wife of a wealthy businessman. J.T. has no money, no job, but plays guitar and is on his way to Los Angeles to try and make it as a songwriter, and Jeff is a burned-out drug counselor; Sam is a Hollywood TV star (whose fictional character is suspiciously dubbed "J.T. Lancer"), while Nick is a drug dealer. Irene writes speeches for a Republican senator but considers herself "an infiltrator" working from the inside to divert power to the people; Meg is a real-estate lawyer, and Michael writes for *People Magazine*.

Real-life viewers who came of age in the Viet Nam war era might enjoy comparing such characters to their own friends—the vagrant philosophers and stoned sidekicks who went back to school and emerged as economists and psychiatrists; the earth mothers and ex-rock queens who got into Jesus or social work or IBM management; the hashish salesmen who became high-level supervisors for the Internal Revenue Service. Todd Gitlin describes the actual transition of youth from the Sixties to the Eighties in *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* as a shift from the "Fighting Back" philosophy (draft card burnings, the Democratic Convention riots, "fragging" in Vietnam—a student movement like "a cyclone in a wind tunnel") to "Kicking Back" ("in the sun with a can of beer").[9]

> What was far more visible, of course, was the money-grubbing and chic self-absorption so much beloved by I-told-you-so journalists, as if a whole generation had moved en masse from "J'accuse" to Jacuzzi; Jerry Rubin's move to Wall Street in the early Eighties garnered more publicity than all the union organizers and antinuclear campaigners among New Left graduates put together.[10]

Some transformations from *Secaucus 7* to *Big Chill* are culturally prophetic. Meg (who wants a baby but not a husband), in addition to being an update of Irene (whose biological clock was already ticking in *Secaucus 7*), is the Eighties-type, self-styled "post-feminist." Independent and determined, she prefigures the self-seeking heroine Heidi in Wendy Wasserstein's 1989 Tony-award winning play, *The Heidi Chronicles*, which lays sisterhood to rest.

Inevitably perhaps, the *Secaucus 7* story wound up, in the fall season of 1985, as a short-lived television program. Entitled *Hometown*, the series, in the manner of *Big Chill*, yuppiefies a set of white, middle-class former Sixties activists. We get their credentials through a *Family-Ties*-style montage, behind the opening titles, of each character participating in an event—sit-in, love-in, protest march, rock festival—which authenticates their Sixties status. They become: a pair of well-off bookstore owners with two kids; a complacent rock idol; a presidential advisor-economist-scholar; a lonely, foolish English professor who is also a bad playwright; a cook-in-residence dad in a yuppie restaurant; and, a glamorous wealthy divorcee. (By 1985 Reagan had been re-elected, so the cadaver of Sixties values was already beginning to stink. The postmodern, politically comatose *Moonlighting* which was launched the same season on another network suited the public taste far better, and *Hometown* disappeared after a few episodes.)

Returning to the question of *The Big Chill*'s Eighties co-optation of *Secaucus 7*'s Sixties activism: it would be tempting but superficial to analyze the spectrum of codes, conventions, and ideologies—one might say "tropes"—of the two narratives by simply contrasting the settings that characterize the two groups. Their surroundings should not be dismissed as evidence altogether. But the pasta, Jeep and Hermes scarves of the *Big Chill* characters are not necessarily what makes them pretentious and selfish, nor do the tunafish, VW beetle, and Mexican peasant blouse of the *Secaucus 7* guarantee them to be modest and (as the saying goes) "still committed." We may more fruitfully examine the distinctive hierarchy of esteemed qualities suggested by each film's plot. Then, too, how each respective set of characters relates to money, work, and social injustice will serve to enhance or devalue those standards deployed most conclusively through narrative structure.

The plots are more closely related than they might appear. Outwardly, the action of *Secaucus 7* revolves around the breakup of a couple, Jeff and Maura, in the course of a brief reunion of old friends; while the key episode in *Big Chill* which reunites its old friends at Alex's funeral is apparently Meg's pursuit of a sperm donor. Beneath the surface, however, *Secaucus 7*'s plot produces the ousting of defunct radical Sixties values in the person of Jeff (a "still committed" activist drug counselor) and their modified recuperation in the form of Chip, the compromiser (he writes speeches for a Republican senator). Conversely, *Big Chill*'s plot dismembers Alex as a representative of defunct radical Sixties values (he gave up a Rutgers physics fellowship on principle and dropped out), then recuperates his energy (and buying power), but not his spirit, for the marketplace through the reclaimed, neutered Nick (another ethically-motivated dropout, from a psychology doctoral program). The film ends with Nick set to become a clone of Harold, the unalloyed sellout (a self-proclaimed "revolutionary" who now owns the flourishing chain of athletic shoe-stores known as "Running Dog").

Let me clarify the relationship between the politics of the two plots. The *Secaucus 7* plot mechanism rejects radicalism via Jeff and embraces compromise, through Chip. But *Secaucus 7*'s complicity in yielding to the status quo is only a matter of degree; it is mild compared with that of *Big Chill*. *Secaucus 7* still depicts Sixties

"ideals"—opposition to bourgeois social relations—as just plain sanity, as we shall see through its characters' attitudes and through the film's style. But *The Big Chill*, in its structure, through its characters and through its style, consistently inscribes Sixties ideals as the naive whims of pampered youth. *The Big Chill* signals to us that it is a running dog eat running dog world.

Sayles himself has said that the *Secaucus 7* group is not based on campus activists at all, but on "people... who had been through VISTA" who "got radicalized... in different ways than the people in SDS got radicalized."[11] In response to the remark that the *Secaucus 7* characters are less ideological than many Sixties movement people, Sayles states that his characters nonetheless "really felt very strongly about their commitments... were issue-oriented and very concrete in their goals." But Sayles also says he wanted them to be "*more acceptable to an audience... which might not like the characters if they met them in real life*" [emphasis added]. Sayles wanted the audience to "possibly reconsider their own perspective on these people and the movement." This intent to make Sixties ideology more agreeable may have also led Sayles to take up the attitude of compromise. Both tendencies are evident not just in the *Secaucus 7* characters' traits (these characters supposedly went to marches but did not organize them)[12] but in the plot structure in which Chip is made more acceptable, and Jeff less so.

Return of the Secaucus 7 sets up an opposition between Chip and the others through Katie and Mike's discussion of where to put everybody in the rented house. They have never met Chip, their friend Irene's new boyfriend, and Mike is worried that he "might not be the mattress on the floor type." He might be "forty, with graying hair," and drink Jim Beam. They confuse Chip's name with other yuppie names like "Skip" and "Biff." And finally the Chip plot is set up through Katie's litany on the meaning of "straight." What kind of straight is Chip? Katie asks Frances, "Prep school straight? Army straight? Political straight?... Boy scout straight? Plaid pants straight?" Frances warns them that Irene, too, is "straighter than she used to be." This exchange serves both to prejudice the audience against Chip and to define the *Secaucus 7* group as the opposite of straight, i.e., "hip"—or, in other words, dissenters.

Later Mike semi-confronts Chip with his reputation for straightness. When Mike is explaining to J.T. what teaching high school students about the Boston Police strike is like, Chip, J.T. and Irene pretend to be students. Chip raises his hand and, when called upon, says that the strike would be illegal because "It's not safe." Mike as teacher shoots back, "Is that your own opinion or are you quoting Calvin Coolidge?" Chip looks duly chastened. Other counts against Chip locate him as representative of conservative ideas. He likes the Restoration play starring a former *Secaucus 7* member, Lacey, which the others hated; his broadcloth shirt is out of place because the other males wear t-shirts; he is a washout at charades; in close-up he is painfully unable to finish his breakfast while the others blithely tell fart stories; he plays the elite game of squash instead of the more popular basketball, and he is creamed on the court. Eventually Chip's stock will rise with the group while, on the other side of the equation, Jeff's will fall.

Jeff is set up as primary representative of Sixties values and as a loser. His girlfriend Maura discusses his decline: "Ever since VISTA his causes have gotten loster and loster." He exhibits self-destructive behavior: carries heroin around but cannot explain why; forgets he is carrying it when the group is busted; identifies with his junkie clients. The film honors Sixties values by attending closely to Jeff's recitation of his heroic criminal record in the service of protest ("Conspiracy to riot; criminal trespass; inciting to riot; suspicion of possession of a controlled substance; trespass on federal property"). But it also disparages those values through the local charges against the group ("Conspiracy to deprive a furry woodland creature of his rights"). In the scene in which Jeff seduces the rock critic Lee with his smooth jive ("You put your counterpoint, passing tones, parallel scales, and focal harmony on top, and it's exploratory... like life"), the film suggests too that Jeff might be a brilliant young man who should have put his talents to better use but had learned instead to become an expert con man.

The opposition between Chip and Jeff is openly framed as, sunning themselves on large rocks at the swimming hole, Jeff attacks "Chip's senator." Here, in the area of politics, Jeff still has the final word, but Chip begins to hold his own.

> **Jeff**: That whole working within the system argument is just a first step towards total co-optation.
>
> **Chip**: There's a difference between co-optation and making the changes necessary to be effective.
>
> **Jeff**: You mean cost effective?
>
> **Chip**: I mean fighting for what you believe in.
>
> **Jeff**: No offense, but your senator is fighting for his job, his house on Martha's Vineyard...
>
> **Chip**: Do you know that, do you really know that? Have you looked at his record?
>
> **Jeff**: All right, how did he stand on the Canal Treaty?
>
> [ellipsis]
>
> **Chip**: [Up against it] But you don't understand—there are international ramifications to these things!

Chip's passionate response tends to give weight to his argument. Soon after this conversation, when Katie spots Chip naked, she expresses surprise and it is suggested that beneath his wimpy exterior lies a great lover: "Now we know what Irene sees in Chip! Hey, the pole-vaulting is over here!" Chip gains further ground with the group (and thereby with the audience) at the cookout. He is all confidence as he imitates the senator, saying he is neither pro-tomato or con-tomato ("There are mitigating circumstances"). Later, in the bar, in a discussion which poses the opposition between working outside the system and working within the system, Chip scores points for both good sense and compassion.

Chip: Don't start with the Trilateral Commission. That's like bringing in Hitler and the Jews.

Jeff: Why not? Why not bring in Hitler and the Jews? How about Allende?

Chip: That's beside the point. We're not talking about efficiency; we're talking about intention.

Jeff: That's horseshit, Chip. Carter has about as much sincerity as Ford had brains. Would you like another beer?

Gradually Chip is embraced by the group, as shown in the end of the film when he uses one of Katie's witticisms to perk up a speech for the senator. Meanwhile Jeff is completely isolated. Maura has slept with his best friend and turned his life upside-down. His fragmented world is symbolized by the pile of wood all around; he's chopped it into kindling. So the *Secaucus 7* plot is finally one of gradual compromise, rejecting radical opposition as self-defeating. *Secaucus 7* is a film that intentionally waters down radical culture for the viewing public. This is affirmed by Sayles' statement of his intention to revise history in order to make it more palatable (and more romantic). From this it might appear that whatever *Big Chill*'s faults, it does not betray the values of *Secaucus 7*, but in fact continues them. But, as I mentioned earlier, it is a question of degree.

In *The Big Chill*, both the living Nick and the dead Alex were destroyed by the idealism of the Sixties. These ideals made Nick an outlaw and killed Alex. In the course of the film, Nick will become enlightened and give up the self-destructive myth that well-adjusted consumerism is inhumane. Nick is brought back into the system and into the fold. Bolstering this narrative line is the accompanying story in which Alex will be understood to have deeply regretted his foolish decision to leave the path of Einstein and Oppenheimer for the likes of Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. This plot is set up by paralleling the similarities existing between nick and Alex and through an opposition between Nick, the idealist, and Harold, the pragmatist, with Harold given the final weight of moral authority.

As the film opens, Alex is objectively eulogized by a venerable Beaufort, South Carolina elder as "a brilliant physics student at the University of Michigan who paradoxically chose to turn his back on science and taste of life through a seemingly random series of occupations." Here, the camera cuts to a close-up of Nick removing his dark glasses (ancient emblem of the False Self). The elder becomes a spokesman for the system and for Harold, making Harold's way appear the natural and wholesome course when he goes on to state, "Are not the satisfactions of being a good man among other common men great enough to sustain us anymore?" Later Nick interviews himself on video and the following exchange equates Nick and Alex (Nick is both "Interviewer" and "Nick"):

Interviewer: You couldn't quite finish that psychology dissertation at Cornell.

Nick: I could have finished it. I *chose* not to.

Interviewer: Then it was on to a series of jobs, all of which you quit.

Nick: Whaddya mean? I was *evolving*.

The withering sarcasm with which William Hurt (as Nick) utters his replies may appear to be good-natured self-deprecation of Sixties values which the film actually appears to understand and appreciate; but the plot confirms the reading that this is plain mockery. The exchange, by returning to the theme of Alex's eulogy, deems the choice to attempt to personally "evolve" to be a form of suicide.[13]

Later, the others discuss Alex's unhappiness in terms of his failed "evolution," again echoing the old man's eulogy and Nick's self-accusations:

Sam: He left that caseworker job in Boston in '78 or so. I don't even know why he was doing that. The guy was a scientific genius, what was he doing welfare work for. And then that construction job, what was that all about?

In conversation after dinner it becomes clear that Nick is capitulating to Harold's way.

Nick: It was easy back then, no one had a cushier berth than we did. It's not surprising our friendship could survive that. It's only out here in the world that it gets tough.

Here Nick obliquely states the film's ultimate explanation of the transition from Sixties protester to Eighties yuppie—that upward-mobility is the universal, natural transition from youth to maturity. His explanation universalizes the transition as one from youth to maturity.

The tough world Nick refers to in this speech is Harold's world, the "real" world: the marketplace. When Sam suggests that Alex killed himself because he "lost touch with his commitment," Harold's answer is, "You gotta get out in the world and get dirty;" i.e., make some money, have kids, "dig in." Harold appeases a cop in another scene, sacrificing everyone's dignity to preserve his position and property. Harold calls the others "bleeding hearts" when Meg and Sarah and Michael begin to express guilt for giving up their "commitment."

Harold's wife, Sarah, goes along with Harold. "I do believe you can help other people, Nick," she says after Nick, with his own "the world is tough" speech, has sulkily begun to show signs of coming around to Harold's position. "Not that you can save them, probably not. But you can do what you can do." You cannot "save the world"—in other words, organize against social injustice—but you can perform selective social work through volunteer efforts such as letting your close friend bed your husband. Thus Sarah displaces dissent and activism with a Reagan/Bush-style "volunteerism" program (although neither of them would go quite so far in Sarah's direction).

It is futile and childishly romantic, the film maintains, to be a selfless worker against the war, against

inequality, and for those who cannot help themselves. Alex was ill-prepared to be a good man among other common good men because the movement reshaped him as dreamy child. How and why he discovered his mistake the weekend after he bought a table saw is the only real mystery of the film. What is clear is that "Get Yourself Another Boy," the words heading the newspaper article about Alex's decision (which Nick finds in Alex's belongings) are words Alex came to deeply regret; and if you say them, warns *The Big Chill*, you will regret them too. We learn that Alex "kept his induction notice, too," in case we care to speculate that his keeping the article indicates he was proud of his choice. If you get with the program, the film is saying, you, like Nick, get Alex's house and Alex's table saw and Alex's girl. You get to be (indeed you must be) a good man among other good men, including, at any cost, your local police. Nick and Harold shake hands, sealing the film's approval of the surrender to self-interest.

We get a different view of the possibilities of living in a capitalist economy in *Return of the Secaucus 7*. Irene wants to invest in J.T.'s career—"something I believe in," not "nerve gas." Unlike J.T. Lancer, this J.T. entertains in a relevant form, writing country songs which, albeit silly, carry social messages ("I Brake for Animals," "Hustler Magazine"). Irene explains her offer, saying, "It's obscene what I make working for the senator." Aside from Jeff's accusation about the senator's house in Martha's Vineyard and Ron's grandiose Barry Manilow Snowmobile barrel-jumping marathon, this is the only moment in which money enters the discourse of the film's characters, a fact which, along with other aspects of the film's tone, mirrors its theme of moderation with commitment intact.

During the cookout sequence the hand-held camera captures what look like candid shots of the actors: Katie laughing at herself accidentally spilling the wine; J.T. clowning for the camera as he tears the lettuce. Both scenes are suffused with verisimilitude, foregrounding the players' own non-Actors Guild status and the film itself as can't-afford-another-take low-budget. Sayles makes the camera a participant in the basketball scene, with accompanying heavy-exertion breathing noises. The camera is further foregrounded when Sayles himself steps in to play the character Howie. Cinema which makes the author prominent as a structure in the film's system as authorial commentary is not always ideologically motivated. Sayles' devices do not necessarily make the film ambiguous. As David Bordwell, et al, state: "Certain technical tics of the art cinema have proven easy to assimilate."[14] But taken together, these elements of Sayles' style do seem to attempt to break naturalism in the same way that using long takes of real blues singers does. Sayles' strategy duplicates the interconnectedness and contiguity characteristic required of Sixties radicals.

Dave Dellinger has said that while the Old Left "went about their regular old lives" except for protest, the New Left said, "the revolution begins in me."

> The revolution comes, like jazz, from, in Charlie Parker's words, "who you are, where you've been." How you live. Interconnectedness between life and politics corresponds to the interconnectedness between people which becomes participatory democracy.[15]

According to Dellinger, when people became impatient with nonviolent resistance and vanguard leaders decided to try and seize power by manipulating the movement, then interconnectedness was lost in both areas. The sense of interconnectedness between politics and culture—between people—is therefore another valid concept through which to compare the ideologies of *Secaucus 7* and *Big Chill*.

At the end of *Big Chill*, Michael jokes that they have all voted to remain permanently with Harold and Sarah. Their hosts are staggered, and the audience is expected to identify with the mock-fright which defines Michael's joke for the rest of the characters and naturalizes private property. In the only comparable moment in *Secaucus 7*, Mike is placing a blanket over Frances, and Katie tells him not to wake her: "If she sleeps longer, maybe we can get her to stay the night."

Consider, too, in the context of interconnectedness, the disparate ways in which life and music are intertwined in the two film. In *Big Chill*, the song "You Can't Always Get What You Want," besides perfectly reflecting in its title the convergence—through the *Big Chill* characters' capitulation to capitalism—of sexual desire, consumerism, and the lost spirit of protest, also extends a motif, carried throughout the film, which reflects the way the characters live out mass-produced lives, through the manner in which the song begins within the fictional world but becomes nondiegetic, part of the score. This motif is initiated with the opening sequence, in which a child sings a popular Three-Dog Night song in the bathtub; it resumes with Karen playing the Stones song on the church organ, and continues as the tape deck of Harold's Jeep pours forth Credence Clearwater, and so on. Mass-produced music was a big part of the counterculture in the Sixties, but its use in *The Big Chill* is a model of co-optation; the fictional world is made to borrow life where there is none.

The film especially borrows genuine community from Motown music. The scene in which Sarah comes to tell Meg she can have Harold for the night, for example, leeches all of its poignancy from the soundtrack, on which Aretha Franklin sings "Natural Woman." (TV advertisers have, of course, since learned from *The Big Chill* to sell their products through coopting the community spirit immortalized in certain Sixties hits; in 1995 this selling of a countercultural birthright is still receiving attention, with Mercedes-Benz's flaunting of Janis Joplin's satirical ode to greed featuring the auto maker's brand-name.) By contrast, in *Secaucus 7*, J.T.'s lyrics are original and a continuation of his personal life. The viewer sees and hears an acoustic guitar, a banjo, live singers.

The Big Chill's philosophy—and capitalist bourgeois society's—is the opposite of interconnectedness; it is the philosophy of extreme individuality, distance, the nuclear family, private property. In *Secaucus 7*, people, not decor, cram the frame. In *The Big Chill* objects are lovingly inserted into the story in so blatant a manner that in a Godard film this would be considered a full-scale analysis of their ideological function. Such shots as four

sets of upscale headlights turning on to the beat of the Stones song, and a crane shot down to the funeral cortege traveling over the bridge, signal money and high production values in the service of wit. The thrill of big-time Hollywood-style production (as opposed to the art film look of Sayles' picture) gives credence to Harold's values, the values of the marketplace.

Similarly our (imaginary) inside look at the private life of Sam, the "incredible star" and *People Magazine* cover celebrity J.T. Lancer, makes our excitement seem as silly as the TV show of which he is the hero, thereby diverting criticism away from the film we are watching. The same effect results from the summer-stock Restoration play scene in *Secaucus 7*, but the economic level at which each of the respective performances is consumed, and the degree of interconnectedness corresponding to each is, again, the whole point.

Money and suicide are a constant source of a sort of gallows humor in *The Big Chill*, making the title's cynical term for death analogous to the cynical term for selling out. Chloe wishes she had been allowed to sit up front with the family, not because Alex meant so much to her but because she has "always wanted to ride in a limo." Meg's depression because she had not spoken to Alex since they had argued elicits a joke from Nick: "That's probably why he killed himself." An even bigger laugh comes when Meg confesses that she had told the suicide he was wasting his life. Sam asks Nick and Harold, "Why do we keep avoiding talking about Alex? Are we afraid to show our emotions?" and Nick replies, "It's a dead subject."

Sam and Harold, gloating over their success, can barely restrain their nervous laughter.

> **Sam**: Who ever thought we'd make so much bread? Two revolutionaries.
>
> **Harold**: Good thing it doesn't mean anything.
>
> **Sam**: Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke.

The fact that Meg's serious speech about her career move from the Philadelphia Public Defender's Office to her Atlanta friend's real estate law office as sheer capitulation to self-interest is full of jokes elucidates the analogy between the death of Alex and the death of the ideals which the group formerly held as "revolutionaries."

> **Meg**: My clients were the scum of the earth, real extreme repul-see-voes. [laughter]
>
> **Michael**: Well, who did you think your clients were gonna be, Grumpy and Sneezy?
>
> **Sam**: No—Huey and Bobby.
>
> **Meg**: ... The offices were very clean, the clients were only raping the land, and then there was the money. El Greedo strikes again.

Money as a topic in *The Big Chill* is intended to move forward the Nick/Alex figure into the bosom of the group by evaluating Harold's money as an expression of sound good sense. Harold cannot believe Alex would kill himself just when he bought a new table saw. Harold tells Nick about the takeover of his company, an inside trading investment tip which will enable Nick to "get into another line of work" (other than drug dealing). On Harold's land, Michael says, "Hey, remember senior year we were all gonna get together and buy that land near Saginaw? What ever happened with that?" "We didn't have any money," Harold replies. "That's when money was a crime." When Michael reads his fortune cookie which says, "Friendship is the bread of life, but money is the honey," Harold seriously observes, "It's just pragmatic." As the J.T. Lancer program comes on, Sam is humiliated by the others' teasing, but the last laugh is Sam's as Harold reminds us that Sam gets money every time the opening sequence appears on the air. When an employee calls Harold "Mr. Cooper" and Sam makes fun of him ("Yass sir, Mr. Cooper, sir"), Harold unashamedly defends his position ("Hey, gimme a break, that's my name.")

Harold's unabashed love of money and privilege is matched by his scorn for his previously-held politics. Whereas, in *Return of the Secaucus 7*, being in jail is something of which to be proud, not ashamed, in his scene with the cop Harold coldly asks Nick if jail is something else he would like to try, "just to see what that's like?" But radicals in the Sixties proudly served time for demonstrating against the war .

In an abundance of ways, The Big Chill takes over, in the interest of the status quo, the Sixties traits first set out in modified form in *Return of the Secaucus 7*. The plot of *Secaucus 7* encodes a respect for the abandonment of the ideals—a radical removal from the establishment in opposition to its social policies—which historically marked Sixties activism. But *Secaucus 7*'s characters and style never suggest that veterans of the Sixties generation should settle for less than an attempt to change the system from within. Through its plot structure and character *The Big Chill* goes further. It deprecates the commitment which some boomer audience members might feel guilty for having deserted. Enhancing this devaluation is the fact that The *Big Chill*'s world is sealed, providing a subtextual ideological security system which yuppies will find comforting. Its professional actors and classical boundaries keep the film well within the extreme individualist, antisocialist constraints of capitalism.

In short, *The Big Chill* signaled that in the Eighties it was okay to return to the traditions—and the consumer habits—of your parents. In comparing the two films, finally, we may say with Chip of *The Secaucus 7* that there is indeed a difference between co-optation and fighting for what you believe.

In Kasdan's Grand Canyon, Kevin Kline (who played Harold in The Big Chill) is Mack, a successful white immigration lawyer in present-day Los Angeles. Driving home from a Lakers game Mack gets lost in a crime-ridden area near The Forum and runs smack into the widening abyss between the rich and the undeserving underclass, through an encounter with Simon (played by Danny Glover). Simon is an African-American tow-truck

driver whose intervention, when Mack's Lexus breaks down, prevents armed black gang members from mugging Mack, or worse. Out of gratitude, Mack removes Simon's sister from the violent neighborhood where her teenaged son has become a gang member; he also fixes Simon up with a soul mate. Meanwhile, Mack's best friend Davis (Steve Martin), a successful white producer of violent movies, is shot by a robber. He emerges from the hospital with a limp and a new respect for life which makes him vow never to explode anything on film again. However, by the end of the film Davis comes to believe that creating movies which "glorify violence, bloodshed, and brutality" is a responsibility he must shoulder. In addition, Mack's wife, Claire (Mary Donnellson) finds an abandoned baby and, after tending it for a day, comes to love it wildly. Since her teenaged son will soon be grown and gone, she insists on adopting the baby, bringing new life to the family.

All three plot lines in *Grand Canyon*—Mack's rescue by Simon, Davis' "message delivered in a .38 caliber envelope," and Claire's baby—flirt heavily with the idea of predestined events, several times termed "miracles." Dialogue introduces this element but it is repeatedly reinforced through the narrative device of dreams and flashbacks, through the soundtrack, through editing, camera position,, and setting.

Here the spirit of 1960s revolutionary consciousness is holistically transmuted into 1990s investment in human capital. The New Left's non-hierarchical interdependence is superseded by a New Age Darwinian paternalism which looks suspiciously like Son of City on a Hill: successful white Americans tapped by miracles lift up the poor, one by one. The capitalist system is going to remain in place, *Grand Canyon* tells us; its violence and racism are natural forces, like the slow movement of mighty rivers through rock. The best that can be done is to stay out of their way, and not worry about them. It is useless to try to stop them.

Bibliography

Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, eds., *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press) 1985.

Canby, Vincent, "The Big Chill," *New York Times*, 23 September 1983, C14: 3.

Dellinger, David, "What We Can Learn from the Sixties," a talk given at the University of Illinois, Urbana campus, 14 March 1989.

Denby, David, "Group Portrait," *New York Magazine* 13, 15 September 1980: 57-58.

Georgakas, Dan and Lenny Rubenstein, *The Cineaste Interviews: On the Arts and Politics of the Cinema* (Chicago: Lake View Press) 1983.

Gitlin, Todd, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books) 1987.

Kael, Pauline, "*The Big Chill*," *The New Yorker* 59, 17 October 1983: 189-92.

Kauffmann, Stanley, "People in Groups," *The New Republic* 189, 31 October 1983: 22-24.

Notes

1 With true Nineties Hollywood temperament, Forrest Gump, the 1995 Best Picture Oscar-winner, represents the spirit of Sixties protest as a pathetic woman who dies as a result of her own foolishness.

2 *Variety* 300, 17 September 1980: 42.

3 *New York Times*, 23 September 1983, C14: 3.

4 *The New Republic* 189, 31 October 1983: 22.

5 *The New Yorker* 59, 17 October 1983: 189-92.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *New York Magazine* 13, 15 September 1980: 13.

8 Canby: 3.

9 Kael: 189.

10 Gitlin: 242-243.

11 *Ibid.*: 433.

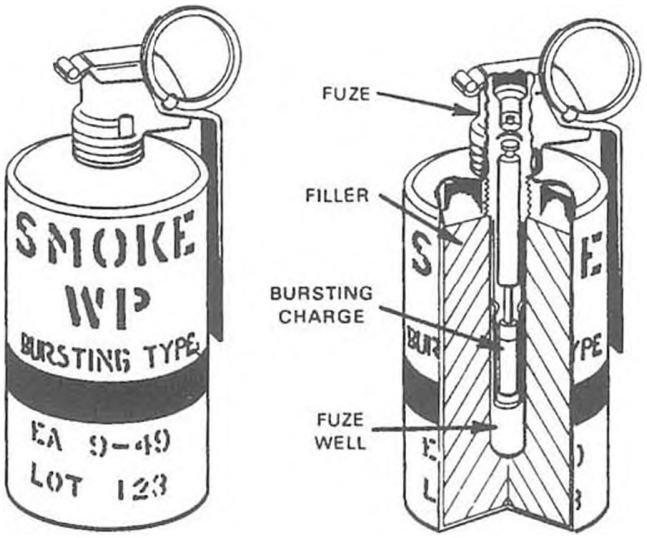
12 *The Cineaste Interviews*. This and the following quote are from pages 326-327.

13 *Ibid.*: 327.

14 The notion of personal evolution was an essential part of the Sixties dissident counterculture. Gitlin connects the ideas of personal evolution with political consciousness: "[Bob Dylan's 1965 song 'Mr. Tambourine Man' expressed] the transcendentalist fantasy of the wholly, abstractly free individual, finally released from the pains and distortions of society's traps, liberated to the embrace of nature and the wonder of essential things, in an America capable of starting the world again" (200-201).

15 David Bordwell, et al, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*: 374.

16 "What We Can Learn from the Sixties," a talk at the University of Illinois, Urbana campus, 14 March 1989.



Peacetime

Tymoteusz Laskowski, 1020 Briar St., Missoula, MT 59802.

Word came yesterday from my mother, a righteous shout across the thousand miles between us, that Dooley, the friend of my youth, was dead. "The drugs erased him," she said, "God rest his soul. They found him in a bathtub with a needle in his arm." She reminded me that she had predicted it, that she had been right all along; it had been destined.

I can fathom things now I couldn't ten years ago as a child in my hometown on the Lake Erie shore. When I picture Dooley now, tragedy is etched clearly in his face, in his gait and his posture. He had been different, a teenage leader who did not put on a tough uncaring act. Boys like me who were a couple years younger hovered around him, and when we told him our troubles, he soothed us with his jokes and stories and pot. With me, he was especially free with his time, cash and girls. Yet he was frail and I was big, so I protected him.

My wife Aggie accepted the news with her typical common sense: "Conor," she monotoned, "the death of someone so young is always painful." She kept her eyes respectfully down and her voice soft, but added, "Maybe in this case, it was for the best." She had known Dooley during the last months, when she and I were sixteen, I a hard case and she trying to be my rock and savior. I was angry with the world then, and no one knew it was Dooley who kept things in perspective. Whenever I thought my life too tough, I had his for comparison. It was the summer I saw my father for the first time in six years and relived his alcoholic rages and his abandonment. It was the summer I stopped listening to my mother about God and church, and she gave up telling me that my every sin was another nail to prick the flesh of Jesus, that I owed everything to the Lord because he had died for me.

Memories of Dooley blow through me like Lake Erie breezes which in bad weather rolled the lake like an ocean, waves breaking on shore, rearranging sand and stone. Thirty miles across lay Canada, a land I always pictured shrouded in pink, the color it is in geography books. In winter when the lake froze I sat for hours on the snowy shore, remembering my father's stories about those who tried to walk the ice to Canada. They had lost their ways among high wind-shaped ice dunes; some had slipped through thin ice and disappeared forever.

Before my mother's phone call, I had not had word of Dooley for ten years. After the night he was beaten up, I did not visit him in the hospital, nor did I see him anytime afterwards. Maybe he went into the army as he said he would. I only know I lost him, willingly, and gave him little thought when, at eighteen, I left town for college. I can find him now, my mother says, under a stone marker in Calvary Cemetery, not far from the lake, not far from Waldameer Park where we were last together. But I have no desire to look for him near waves I have long abandoned for the flat green fields of the Iowa midwest.

The lake, I am sure, still rolls and breaks on the sand and gravel shore; things like that don't change. When I was nine, I stood in the surf with my father, occasionally puffing on his marijuana joint. My pant-legs had been rolled and water splashed my knees as he pointed across the lake, saying Canada had not been a bad place to live and sometimes he wished he'd stayed there. The winds drowned out some of his words, but in calm intervals I heard about his army tour in Vietnam, and Germany afterwards, how after nights of dreams that tossed him, he went AWOL to Sweden and eventually to Canada. After a year of no job, time spent on Ontario beaches looking across, he had hitched a ride home for his court-martial.

"You're too young to remember," he said. "I spent six months in Leavenworth before coming back to you and your mother. She was crazy enough to wait."

Another time my mother had been on the beach with us. She wrapped an arm around me and led me through the surf. We floated underwater, faces down, holding hands, ripples lapping our bodies. I blew bubbles to signal my father I was alive.

Dooley's father died in 1974, an intelligent and angry man. Dooley and his sisters had worn the bruises that reflected his temper. He had been a veteran of Korea and a physics teacher at a Catholic high school. Too smart for his own good, my mother said. He drank and abused his family, quit his job and began a series of weekend disappearances, which grew lengthier until one summer afternoon, the day of Nixon's resignation. Dooley came home to find the television blaring in the living room and his father in a bathtub full of water, pistol in hand. "The water was red," Dooley reminded me on our last night together. "And in my head, I still hear the newscasters talk about the President."

We were on the beach that last night, at a County-sponsored picnic for kids from probation group homes. On the bluff behind us, kids and counselors cleaned sinks in a pavilion and picked debris off the picnic grounds. Wind stirred the lake; the moon had risen full like a ball of white ice. We stood naked on a crumbling concrete jetty. Despite strong wind that carried waves over our ankles and blew bugs in our faces, it was hot and we expected rain.

Since his father's suicide, Dooley's mother had kept to her bedroom, only emerging to report conversations with God and that angels had taught her husband the harp. Dooley took more drugs, and it was a drug offense that had landed him on probation.

I was on six months probation for assault. Five months before, I had been playing street hockey while Dooley sat on the sidelines. Something he had said upset one of the players, and while Dooley stood, hands in pockets, talking calmly, the boy raised his fist. From behind I smacked the kid with my stick. At the hearing, my mother told the judge she had done her best, had raised me Christian and had prayed to the Lord. Now she was washing her hands of me, at least until the County fixed my behavior. She laid much of the blame on Dooley and, when I was ordered to the group home, I was forbidden contact with him.

Five months was a long time. I'd stayed out of trouble and when the picnic was arranged, specifics of the court

order were forgotten. No one objected to Dooley and me together or noticed when we slipped down to the beach.

The lake shore was a relief from the heat and insects and from the counselors on the bluff. Earlier, they had boasted about my "modified" behavior. The day before, they had taken a day's television privilege from me because I took a swing at a kid, but today, when a counselor bumped me in a softball game, they fell over themselves in praise when I checked my temper. I overheard them talk about my improvement since I'd taken up with Aggie, a "nice" girl to keep me out of trouble. I might have busted someone then, but Dooley grabbed me and took me to the beach.

On a concrete jetty, bent over the water, Dooley poised naked for a dive while a seagull flashed across the moon. He timed his jump between waves and his slender figure barely rippled the water; his long hair floated behind in a stream, waiting for me to follow it. I jumped clumsily, feet first, arms wide, into a crest, and was pushed back towards shore, surfacing with a mouthful of water and sand.

Dooley came to me. "Feels good," he said, water beading on the pale whiskers of his chin.

"Anything to get away for a while," I said.

He kicked his feet and breast-stroked into the lake. His butt popped up and down like the whitecap of a small wave. He stopped and turned.

"Hey, the water's pretty rough," I shouted.

He shrugged and swam back. "Are you afraid I'll drown?"

Above us, eyeing us like we were something edible, the seagull hovered. I picked up a stone from the lake floor and threw it at the bird. Dooley looked at me disapprovingly and I dropped the second stone I was about to launch.

"I'm tired of it all," he said, and nodded his head towards the picnickers on the bluff.

"But you're done." I kicked water on him. In a month he would be eighteen and released from the court's jurisdiction.

"Nothing's working out," he said. "Those jobs they got me: cleaning yards, McDonald's; it's all garbage." A wave nearly swamped us. He spat water. "Problem is, nobody's got a sense of humor anymore. You got to be on time, do things one way. Work is worse than school."

"Hell, I'd love to be eighteen," I said. "I'll trade places with you."

"You got more than me. You're luckier than I am." He hunched his shoulders, walked out of the water, then turned back, "You got Aggie."

"No more I don't," I said.

"What are you talking about? She's too good to let go."

"Too good," I said, words barely coming out. Water rippled around my ankles and I kicked a foot out of the sand.

Dooley placed an arm over my shoulder, and I let his hand pat my matted hair.

There had been girls before Aggie but none like her, so cool and serene. I was slow with her. For months we learned about each other, holding hands and talking about things that matter. After the first time we made love—in the early evening, on an isolated part of the beach—we lay close under a wool blanket, breathing in and out of each other, looking at the emerging stars, and wondered which constellation held sway over us that night.

"When I'm with her, I feel some law's being broken," I said. "To hell with it."

"Talk," he said. He always demanded I explain myself; I remember him for that.

"Inside me," I continued, "it isn't right. Like I'm getting something I don't deserve and it'll get taken away when I'm not looking. You know the system don't give you a reward unless you do what they want. But Aggie is just always there." I shivered and hugged myself. We walked over to our pile of clothes. Sea gulls wailed and wheeled above. They tipped their wings, dove to the lake and fought the wind. Sometimes the wind stood them upright in mid-air and they squawked and beat their wings in search of a gentler current.

"Aggie ain't the system," Dooley said. "Don't be stupid."

I pulled on my pants. Dooley reached underneath his clothes and grabbed a loaf of bread stolen from the picnic. He flung a slice in the air and watched gulls fight for it. He tossed a couple more.

I shook my hair and dried myself with my shirt.

"I'm not stupid," I said.

He threw the bread loaf at me, then sat on his haunches and pounded the sand. "You're stupid," he said.

I controlled the urge to hit him. He crept on hands and knees, grabbing slices of bread from the sand and dusting them off. He squatted, kept completely still, and held out pieces of bread on his open palms. Two birds waddled towards him, grabbed the bread in their beaks and flew away. He held more out. Soon gulls fought to reach his palms and when the bread was gone they pecked at his hands in search of crumbs. Only his eyes flinched as beaks pinched his flesh and I wondered when the pain would make him pull back. But he didn't seem to mind. Bubbles of blood broke in between his fingers, and red drops hit the sand. Still he did not move, not till I yelled and waved my arms, scattering the birds.

"Are you crazy?" I cried.

He smiled and said my name, "Conor." Then he shook his head as though there was something here I shouldn't understand.

I remember, even now, the gull's eyes shining like black polished stones. They still gleam in the dark of my mind on days when wind and rain are in the air and I walk the acres of farmland Aggie and I have bought. I see them in the eyes of crows, sleek and black, like gulls in search of carrion. It doesn't seem to matter now that I do understand, that I could give Dooley's look back to him, nod my head, hold my chin and say, "I see. I'm not stupid anymore." Maybe in that moment on the beach I could have helped him.

"You're an idiot," I said and picked him up off the sand.

Kneeling on the jetty, he rinsed his hands in the lake. I finished dressing and sat with him on the concrete.

Water reminded me of my father, a man who had crossed an ocean and a lake to come back to me. He lives now on a hot ocean coast, waiting for me to rejoin him.

"Last month," I told Dooley. "I saw my Dad."

"I thought he was gone forever."

"He's in Florida. He sent a ticket and I flew down. He wants me to move there."

"Florida, man," Dooley said. "No winter there."

"White beaches and sunshine. Girls in string bikinis." I laughed and kicked loose stones into the lake. "He's remarried. To a Vietnamese with three kids. He's a drug abuse counselor." I swatted a mosquito on my neck.

"What's your mother say about you moving to Florida?"

"Of course, she wants me to stay. She visits me at the group home every day. Reminds me how rotten Dad was to leave. How she's put up with me so I owe it to her to stay."

My mother's constancy is something to be marveled at. She makes weekly calls to Iowa now, and I lean back and smoke while she fills my head with Christ. I acknowledge her continual pleas for me and Aggie to move back home as the last vestige of her maternal role. By now she must realize it's the distance that keeps us connected.

Initially, my mother had pretended not to care about my visit to Florida. She did not ask me about my father, but limited herself to statements like: "He must be in pretty bad shape to not visit both of us." I ignored the hope for him in her voice. Cruelly, I had resolved not to answer anything but direct questions and she, in her pride, never asked them. So I never told her, or anyone, the truth about Florida. My visit had been in summer when mosquitoes were the size of dragon flies and sweat drenched my back whenever I stepped outside. My father's house had been quiet—the whir of an air-conditioner whispering through beaded curtains in the doorways, my father breaking silences to say in low monotone, "Weather's great here, no snow ever," while across the room, the woman and her children murmured, watching TV with the sound down. My father continued, "Please, I want to make up for lost time."

I remember him by these words—war veteran, recovered alcoholic. He could lift himself only to a life of expiation for the crimes he feared he'd committed. He writes each Christmas, same sense in his words, that he has something to make up for. I answered the first of his letters, but the others I have burned after reading.

On the jetty, I lied to Dooley. "I think I'll go to Florida."

"So that's why you're dumping Aggie? 'Cause you're moving?"

"That's why."

Aggie sits in this room with me, in an easy chair, stroking the slack of her belly which recently emptied itself of our first-born child. Back in that summer, her face was smoother and her hair lacked the traces of gray. We sat on her backyard swings when I told her I was going to Florida. Her lips had thinned. She stared at me with a desire and seriousness that only intensified my fears and resolve to leave her. I told her Florida would be a new start; the weather was great, no snow ever. She said nothing, but I saw she suspected something untrue.

"Florida," Dooley said with a low whistle. "It's a place to go. The County can't wait to dump me." He stared at the lake, looking like he hoped a wave might reach and carry him off.

"I never told my father I loved him," he said. "But that's not the problem. Because I never loved him." His face turned brittle like transparent fine glass. "In the bathtub, the water was red. And in my head I still hear the newscasters talk about the President."

On summer days, when the sky is blue and infinite over brown fields and there hasn't been a hint of rain for weeks, I think about what I could have replied. Often, something clear and logical comes to mind and I slap my thigh in regret. Though I question whether either logic or clarity could have helped.

I said nothing.

"I'm damned cold," he said, then looked at me and said my name again, "Conor."

"Well, put your clothes on." I stood up and pitched a stone into the waves. Neither of us said anything. Our silence was intact until seagulls scattered when someone shouted from the beach. Six kids walked the shore towards us.

"Hey," the youngest, Mario, yelled to me. "Aggie showed up looking for you."

"She can't go a day without her lover," Anthony, a tall round boy, laughed.

Dooley stood up and hugged his bare chest. He smiled as the boys on the beach whistled at his nakedness.

"Nice bod," one yelled.

"What's this?" Anthony said. "You a couple of fairies?"

Dooley pushed past me towards them. He picked up his clothes.

"Hey Dool," one of them asked, "got any dope?"

"I always have dope," he smiled as he dressed.

"I don't know if I want it from a skinny faggot like you," Anthony said, turned to the others and laughed. I grabbed him from behind and locked his head between my forearm and biceps. "You don't have to take any dope, bonehead." I ground my knuckles into his bare scalp. "What the hell kind of haircut is this anyway?" I let him go, and he rubbed his recently-shaven head.

"He's going to be a marine," Mario said. "Gonna get his ass shot off."

"Goddamn," Anthony said and reached for Mario. I pushed Anthony away.

"You're dumb," I said. "You still got a year to wait."

"I'm ready." His eyes darted. "My PO is setting up the enlistment. I'm doing push-ups and sit-ups and running." The draft had recently ended and the volunteer army begun. Probation officers and school counselors dumped kids like us into the services. Army recruiters had chased me, emphasizing how my life was going nowhere. One called the house, and my mother, remembering how war and the army had stolen her husband, quoted Jesus to him about turning the other cheek. She slammed the phone in his ear.

Anthony knelt to tie his sneaker, but came up with a handful of sand and threw it in my face. I dodged his swing, caught his arm and pulled it behind him.

"Maybe the marines will teach you how to defend yourself," I said. The others formed a circle, urging a fight.

I remember all those kids, names and faces. Some were friends, but most were just those I'd been thrown in with. What we did together wasn't important. Anthony's is the face I have the most trouble with. I haven't made peace with him yet.

Dooley grabbed my arm. "Let's smoke dope," he said to the others. "I got something that'll make you all feel like you're in your mothers' arms again."

After I shoved Anthony away, Dooley whispered to me, "Get yourself out of here. Go find Aggie."

"No," I said. I felt I belonged there with Dooley and the others. Aggie could wait, and anyway, I was afraid of her; she might still be able to reach me with her look or touch.

I lagged behind as Dooley led the others to the foot of a bluff. He faced the lake and sat under ash trees while they formed a semi-circle. The moon shone on his white clothes and brown whiskers. He crossed his legs and delicately fingered a small block of tinfoil.

"Sit down," he told me. "I've got one of the secrets of life here." His voice was a wave drawing me. I sat and completed the circle.

"I wanted a few of us together," he said, not shouting, yet loud enough to be heard above the waves. "Time to say good-bye, folks."

"Where are you going?" someone asked.

"Dooley looked at me. "I wanted to tell you before the others came." He sat straight and announced, "Uncle Sam's got me. The army."

"What the hell," Mario said. "I can't figure you for the army."

"There's no work here," Dooley said. "No money, no nothing. My PO says it's the last thing for me."

"You and me, Dooley," Anthony said like the officer he would one day become, "we'll take care of the country."

"I ain't gung-ho like you." Dooley laughed as his hands worked the foil, in no hurry, creasing edges, like a seamstress working a hem. The moon's rays reflected the foil, bathed his slow fingers in gray light. "Yeah," he said to Anthony. "We all know the marines are looking for a few good crazy men."

Anthony stared down, wondering if he had been insulted. "My dad was a marine. Even before Nam," he said.

Wind blew Dooley's hair off his shoulders. He smiled while he gripped a block of dark brown hash and broke it in half. He skimmed the surface of one half with a pen knife, slivers of the hash falling into the foil. He packed the slivers into a small pipe, took a gray lighter and sucked the flame into the bowl.

"Take this," he said to me.

I puffed and passed the pipe. I exhaled with a cough and relaxed.

Anthony extolled the virtues of the marines to Dooley. A seagull squawked and Anthony jumped up and threw a stone at the bird. Dooley reached for his arm, already cocked with another stone. But Dooley let him throw. "What's the difference," he said, "army or marines."

I lay back. Stars poked through clouds. I closed my eyes and pictured Dooley's hands loosely gripped on the knife, so delicate, like a life-saving surgeon's, carving up the hash. Vietnam had not been long behind us. We had grown up with sights of soldiers brandishing knives and guns. Thanks to television, we had seen more acts of war than any generation before us.

I could not fit Dooley into that scene. I could not imagine a bayonet filling his hand or his long, graceful fingers loading a clip into an M-16.

I sat up quickly. The pipe was repacked and its flame lit up Mario's face, his lips puckered to smoke. As I took the pipe I closed my eyes. A red-orange glow penetrated my lids as Mario lit the bowl.

I did not inhale. I did not want a fog to cloud my brain. I opened my eyes, felt the sting of the lighter's heat, and through the wiggling flame, I watched Dooley, sitting there, watching me.

"Take a draw," he said.

I fought against the high, the mist of one puff of hash. I knocked away Mario's hand and threw the pipe into Dooley's stomach.

"What the hell is this?" I yelled and stood up.

"What do you mean, pal?" he said. He held the pipe and reached for more hash.

"He's horny for Aggie," Anthony said and everybody laughed. They poked at each other and laughed some more. They began telling lies about girls we'd known and someone said how cool Dooley was, what a great high he'd given us. I stood, forgotten, until I interrupted in a strained voice–"The army, Dooley. Why the hell the army?"

It went quiet again and Dooley stared.

"You'll find out," he said. "There's nothing doing out there. What's the difference anyway? At least I'm not crazy enough to join the marines."

Anthony opened his mouth to argue but I interrupted, "You can't do it. You'll never make it," I said. "You won't follow orders. They'll break you."

"So it all sucks," Dooley said. "Like school. Only more rules to break. And the ammo's live."

"Leave him alone," Anthony said. The others had picked up their own conversations.

"They'll cut your hair," I said.

"Jesus Christ," Anthony said. "The army'll make him a man. Nothing wrong with serving your country." He spoke defiantly. So soon after the war, that sentiment was not often heard. We hadn't the years to forget or years under optimistic presidents who would reaffirm militarism and be cheered for it.

"Do you care about my hair?" Dooley asked.

"It's just the first thing I thought of."

"So you don't really care."

"Damn it," Anthony said. "You guys are sounding awful queer."

"Shut up, Anthony," Dooley said. "What I'm doing has nothing to do with my country, nothing to do with

being a man. What I'm doing is because I've got no choice."

"Ah, hell," Anthony said. Our talk was too subtle. For him, it must have been like looking for stars through a blacked-out window. In a newspaper my mother sent me a few years back, there were two paragraphs about Anthony, hometown boy lifted from a troubled past to become a marine lieutenant. "The marines wouldn't take a long-haired doper like you," Anthony told Dooley.

"You're both out of your heads," I said and looked around to the bluff, the trees, the shore.

"I wish you'd understand," Dooley said. He shook his hair, then took the lighted pipe from Mario. "Screw it. One more round on this stuff."

I stepped away dizzily. I half-formed a thought to find Aggie, tell her I wasn't going to Florida. The hash was clearing from my head, and suddenly I felt silly outside the circle.

Anthony stood with his legs spread, pointing at Dooley. "He's a wimp. The army don't need him."

Dooley was himself, calm. He leaned back and his gaze settled on me.

"There's no more dope," someone whined. "Any more dope, Dooley?"

Dooley stood and faced Anthony.

"Nothing's left," Dooley said. He looked into each face, then back to Anthony. "To hell with it all. To hell with the army and marines. To hell with you, Anthony."

I rushed in and stepped between the two. Someone grumbled, "I'm losing my buzz, man." In the corner of my eye, I saw Anthony make a fist. I tried to pull Dooley out of the circle, but he stood like dead weight and his resistance made me fall into him.

"Let it alone," he said, and pushed me aside.

"Get out of here, Conor," Anthony said, his fist raised. The others sensed a fight and quieted.

In calm, drawn-out words, Dooley said to Anthony, "You're an asshole."

Anthony's fist started and I knew I had time to stop it, to pull his hand behind him, to break his arm if I had to. But I let the punch land, solidly, on Dooley's jaw. I watched his head snap and his body sprawl on the sand. Time has not softened the sound and sight of it. And the rationality that tells me, without doubt, that Dooley had already reached a place beyond my help, has not made it easier to forget. Martyrs like him, I have learned, have given up and do not want to be saved, but the guilt of letting them go seems to linger in those who are left behind.

Dooley got to his feet, swaying. I grabbed a crooked stick of white driftwood and he smiled at me before looking at all the others. "There's no more buzz," he said. "You're all assholes, like Anthony here."

The instinct of the mob took over. With Anthony's lead, the circle closed around Dooley. I spit in the sand, but stood, rooted. "What are you doing?" I finally shouted, then just yelled to blot the sounds of Dooley's groans, of kicks into bone and flesh.

I ran away to the shoreline where a gull darted on skinny feet. I swung my driftwood stick and the bird skipped to the water's edge. As it rose to fly, an incoming wave swamped it and the bird floundered, wings flailing. I swung the stick wildly, only splashing water. The bird fluttered. Soggy and dazed, it flew to the jetty as I swung again into the lake. I waded through the water up to my waist and raised the stick. The gull sat, exhausted, chest heaving. I swung again, but the bird spread its wings and pushed into flight. The stick cracked and rained splinters as a wave pushed me to the jetty and laid me on my back. I smiled as the gull banked into the wind, shook its wings, and rose into the moon.

In the last hours of night, my eyes bleary and my clothes wet with rain, I sat on a dune as paramedics carried Dooley past me. Aggie sat with me and I stretched my arm over her shoulders, resting my chin in her hair. She talked to me about Dooley and about nothing. I gripped her tighter and she wiped her face in my sleeve, gently bit the flesh of the inside of my elbow, and whispered my name, "Conor."

I had been a child then and counselors warned me Aggie's arms were symbolic, a return to my mother. In the months that followed they would have weaned me from them if I had allowed. Ten years later, I have become a man and happy I have still not put childish ways behind. There are times still when I must, like a son, seek my wife's comfort.

Aggie sits in her chair and rubs my neck as I kneel at her side, crying for Dooley. From another room, our baby son wakes with a wail, and I stop my crying to respond to his. I get him and place him into Aggie's arms; immediately his blind, hungry mouth latches onto a brown nipple. As I watch him suckle, I already fear the mistakes I will make with this child. But someday I will take him to the stone marker in Calvary Cemetery. We will walk the Lake Erie beach and I will talk to him about Dooley. We will watch waves crest and drop at our feet and I will tell him to be patient and kind; there are things like this that seem never to change.

Tymoteusz Laskowski has been published in ***Manoa, Antietam Review, Lake Effect, Chiron Review,*** **and** ***MELUS.*** *He's the co-author of* ***A Race to Nowhere: A Nuclear Arms Race Primer*** *(Chicago: Pax Christi Press, 1980).*

SAND

Ronald J. Wichers, PO Box 153, Destin, FL 32540-0153

My folks are dead now. Don't ask me how. Dutcher'd come and pick me up sometimes on this chopper he made. Saturday mornings, really bitchin' Sit back on the sissy bar and let the wind streak my hair back and Dutcher between my legs. That thing had no springs and the vibrations would make you feel like really something crazy and I used to feel like I was birthin' Dutcher right out o' my legs into the sky that was just a blue flame all around on acid. We'd drop some acid and hop on his chopped hog and just watch the road streak up at us with that white broken line flyin' off it like darts you had to keep duckin' Then I went to him one morning and he got really freaked. But it was this one night I wouldn't let my ol' man do it to me no more and he tossed me out in the backyard. Sixteen. I was sixteen then. Seems like a zillion years ago. Pueblo, Colorado. October, and the ice air tumbles out of those Rockies and you think you're going to turn into a stone. All I had on was my slippers and a nightgown. Just tossed me out in the backyard, for Christ's sake. I found some dried-up little ears of corn in the tumbled down corn patch and curled up in the tool shed sucking on the dried kernels. I heard Heidi, our mutt, cryin' outside and we kept one another warm. Would a froze to death sure if it weren't for her and those stubby little ears of corn. In the morning I hid out by the creek til I saw the old pig leave in his pickup to go to work, (he's a bricklayer), then I went in and put on my heavy clothes and that's when I went to Dutcher's place.

I tried to tell him that we could live on his bike and just drive all over the country 'cause I couldn't go back home anymore 'cause I was pretty sure the ol' man would try it again, and maybe kill me or I'd kill him, and that Dutcher wouldn't have to worry about the Army anymore. That was when all these poor slobs were starting to go to Vietnam. We could just travel around the country on his hog and just live. That was what I kept tellin' him...just live, but all I could do was get him to take me over to the bus station. I had a hundred and twenty bucks the ol' man had stashed away that he thought nobody knew about. Pig. Always thought I was out like a light after he was through stickin' it every place he could find. But I always saw him stashin' money away behind a brick in his closet. Pig. Always played with his money after doin' it to me, and he always thought I was just too dumb to watch him. I was afraid to take it all. Just grabbed whatever my hand laid on and ran out of there like a dog.

So, anyway, I never felt so good, so, so clean, I guess you'd say, so free and clean, Christ, I felt like the Queen of England on that Greyhound...headed for Boulder where there was a Hendricks concert; and I remembered Jo Ann, my best friend, said she was going to be there but I couldn't find her. Ended up with this black dude and we had one dynamite time. Jesus God Christ, I think that was the best times of my whole life. His name was Ray, and I told him I was just plain cut loose 'cause my folks lived in the hills and were just so dirt poor they couldn't afford to raise too many females.

After the Hendricks concert we hitched out to the Haight. God...that was when everything was just startin' It was so fucking beautiful you couldn't believe it, nobody ever ripped anybody off, we just lived, we all just lived and acid was still in sugar cubes. I turned over one morning and Ray, he just up and gone. You ever seen those little hourglass things for eggs? I sat for about a week ripped on acid and reds just flippin' that little thing around. Just trippin' away for about a week and a half on that thing. Three minutes at a time. Three minutes of sand at a time till I got myself rollin' again. Panhandled some money and gave Jo Ann in Pueblo a call and she came out and we shacked up with these acid heads on Fulton street for about a couple or six months, I don't know how long it was and people were getting sent to Vietnam like crazy, and everybody started painting peace signs on their foreheads and flowers all over their bodies .... Jesus it was amazing.

Dylan, Hendricks, Joplin, Crosby-Stills, The Byrds... Jesus...it was so fucking amazing in those days. Nobody ever ripped anybody off and they used to pass the sugar cubes out like they were just...sugar cubes. But then the war thing just got bigger and bigger and the pigs started beatin' people up just for sayin' that if you didn't want to go, you shouldn't, and that was when it started getting really weird. Berkeley blew up in everybody's face and Kent State. Black people were burning down the whole country it seemed like. Politics. Everything just turned into politics. Jo Ann went back to Pueblo the year they beat the kids in Chicago, but there wasn't no way I was going back there, and I wound up in Vegas with this guy named Kiki. He had this huge black Ford! Just like a gangster in a movie, but he was Cuban, and he always said that it was my eyes and my legs that just drove him nuts, but that what really got him was my tummy. Something about my tummy, I don't know. Picked me up one day on Van Ness when I was hitching, trying to get from the Haight over to Berkeley for a demonstration I heard was gonna happen over there, and this Kiki dude tells me why stop in Berkeley, that there's nothin' there but a bunch a punks in blue jeans. That I didn't look like blue jean material to him, and why not come to Vegas with him. Shoot! I was coming down off some Orange Sunshine and really ragged out anyway, and this guy smelled of Bay Rum and filet mignon, and I figured it was about a million light years from Pueblo, Colorado, and the next thing I know I'm waking up with the desert rolling by, and Kiki's got my panties down around my knees. Sand flying by outside, nothing but sand and rock and heat waves making it all look unreal like we was all under water or something, in this air-conditioned Ford doin' about eighty, a driver and all. With gloves. I remember the guy driving had little black gloves on, and he never looked in the back to see. I remember glancing into the rearview mirror to see if he was trying to sneak a peak but his head just stayed stone straight ahead, his knuckles making the leather gloves shine the way he gripped the wheel real hard.

Jesus. I think Kiki must've been the single most horniest person I ever came across, so to speak, but he wasn't a bad guy, all in all, and he never put me down.

I told him my parents were killed on a cruise in the Caribbean Sea when I was just a kid and that I ran away from an orphanage, and I think he believed me. He got me an apartment and lots of really classy clothes because that was the kind a tricks he lined up for me...personal friends of his. God-zukes some of those dudes had so much gold on their fingers it looked like some kinda arthritis sometimes, these big knobby rings and all. But when I found out Kiki was part of the Mob I got scared and moved out and found a job at Vegas Village in the dry goods half of the store. That place was a real trip. It was run by Mormons and you'd never know you were in Las Vegas which was fine as far as I was concerned. I used to wear these really short dresses with the kind of panties I used to wear on calls 'cause some of the guys who worked in the grocery half of the store, (it was, like, this really humongous store, see, half of it was a giant grocery store and the other half, where I worked, was this department store; I worked in the fabrics department), well...I used to get a kick out of wearing this steamy stuff 'cause I noticed one afternoon that some of these guys over on the grocery side would go charging in behind the dairy cases whenever one of the show girls would come boppin' through with, maybe a fishnet mini dress and you could see their panties and, woo! some of these characters were so horny! You could see them peeking through the rows of milk cartons or the margarine. Down on their knees, I guess, inside the walk-ins following these really classy chicks while they were reaching up or down for stuff. It was a riot.

Anyway, I went over there one night around nine on my last break to get a half pint of milk to have with a package of Hostess Cupcakes, and there was this really neat looking kid working there who I never saw before, and I could see him flashin' on me, but in a really nice, embarrassed kinda way, and so I just looked at him as I went past in an...open sort of way, and be damned if he wasn't over in my department not an hour later. Well this kid must've looked seventeen, I swear, but he was twenty-one. I know because he told me the next night in bed in this creepy motel I was stayin' in, and I said I didn't believe him, so, Jesus, he shows me his I.D. Layin' in bed and he's got his wallet out, right? His name was Hank. Hank Barnston. That first night we balled and balled and balled one another till sunup. He pretended he was an old hand, but it was his first time, I could tell easy, not only 'cause of the way he fumbled and bumbled around at first but because of his rate of improvement. By five the next morning he really was an old hand. I told him I was absolutely broke, that I had to send my money to my folks who were migrants and that I could hardly even feed myself and they didn't like me at the store 'cause my dresses were always too short, and it was really mean of them 'cause, I told them that my dresses were old ones from when I was a kid, besides I was always so stressed out all the time about how my folks and my sisters were doin' that I couldn't ever concentrate on my work.

Hank moved out of his parent's house that week and we got an apartment in this really seedy complex near the Sahara and they fired me. Two weeks later Dutcher shows up with some Hessian biker friends of his from Texas and they had a thousand hits of black acid with them that they got in from New York somehow. Jesus! Hank never dropped before, God, he never even saw a biker before, 'cept probably from the back window of his daddy's car, but I got him to drop a whole hit, and he loved it. I really respected him a lot for that. Startin' at the top like that: a whole hit of New York Mother's Milk. Hank was a really sheltered type, but he wasn't no candy ass, and Dutcher liked him. When he'd go to work I let those guys take turns on me. It was amazing, on acid for a whole week for free (and acid in Vegas was goin' for ten or twelve bucks a hit then,) and treated like a goddess by the troops all day, then Hank at night. It was amazing! I took ten hits one night, and ended up out at Lake Mead with Dutcher and these Hessians and some other chicks they picked up at one of those dives on the Boulder Highway. Woke up alone bare-assed on the sand. I didn't think Dutcher would do something like that: just leave somebody on the sand like that, naked. Could've at least put my dress on for me. But acid can do really weird things to people, and besides maybe I said something to him. But it hurt that he'd just leave me laying there on the shore of that lake, covered with sand and biker slime like that. Had cum in my *hair*, for Christ sake. Took me an hour to wash off. I hitched back into town. I don't know why I never got pregnant. I always thought it was the acid, 'cause I never could remember to take them funny little pills, you know? Those things that come in that kinda calendar fucking thing? Anyway, if I'd a had a kid in those days it probably would've had four heads.

Hank had been in school, but he dropped out 'cause he was gettin' so high all the time, and that set the Army on his ass, so he joined the National Guard unit there, but he was gettin' so high he couldn't deal with the silly meetings. That was what he told me, anyway, that he'd go there, and everybody just looked so weird that he couldn't stand it. They told him he was going to have to go to Kentucky for training, and he freaked out. Said he couldn't be away from me. That he loved me so much he'd just fold up and die if we were away from one another, so we put our stuff in his car and headed for Colorado, 'cause my Mom had been callin' me asking me to come back and help her 'cause she had the sheriff throw the ol' man out and she was completely wigged out all the time. Hank asked me to marry him, but I told him that I didn't believe in that establishment bullshit.

It was so fucking weird. It was November and the nights were getting super cold in Pueblo. Hank couldn't make anymore payments on his car, and he was afraid to get a job because of the Army. My three kid sisters argued about everything. The ol' man would drive by after work real slow and look real mean and hard at the place as he went by in his pickup and scare the shit out of everybody, so every time you heard something you jumped outa your panties, 'specially at night. Mom was getting welfare, and the dogs from all over were living under the house cause Heidi, our mutt, was in heat and you could hear their

heads banging on the floorboards, fucking the shit out that poor little bitch dog, with those ice-knife winds slashing off the Rockies. I can't tell you how weird it was that winter. I always thought it was funny that Hank never asked me about how come they weren't migrant farm workers but I guess he was used to the way I could put stuff together.

Things got rock bottom around New Years, and Hank left. He told me he was going back to Vegas, that he could sell his car and send the money. That guy was always so real, so...I don't know...faithful, I guess you could say, so I just totally believed everything he ever said, and when he called ten days later from Vegas he said he just didn't care about anything anymore and that he was just gonna go to Fort Ord and go into the Army 'cause the Guard had red-lined him, whatever the hell that was supposed to mean. Said he didn't care about whether the Vietnam thing was right or wrong he just didn't care about anything anymore.

I told him that I hoped he got his fucking head blown off and hung up. I told my mom that we were married, but she didn't seem to believe me.

My poor old mom. She was a stone *saint*. I really mean it. She had four kids and stayed married to the devil himself for twenty years, so I know she had to be a saint.

Then there were all these Jesus Freaks runnin' aroun, Christ Almighty, even Dylan got to be a born-again Christian, and all of a sudden drugs were bad and the pigs pulled out of that Vietnam. I never fell for any of that Jesus stuff, though. Dutcher got thrown in the pen in Grand Junction for killin' some guy in a fight. He's still there. My sisters got old enough to where they could help Mom out, and I met some guy from Taos who thought he was an artist, but he was really just a bricklayer. Bud Casey. He doesn't get a lot of jobs anymore. We had a kid. Jesus! Me with a kid, and hah! it only has one head, we call him No-Name 'cause we couldn't agree on anything and he's like a wind-up toy that don't quit. He hardly sleeps, I ain't kiddin.' You can't hardly ever get that kid to lay down. If he ain't crawling up something he's crawling into something. You try to take him to the store or a McDonalds or a park he's all the time running around talking to people askin' all kinds of questions.

Wonder what Kiki'd think of my tummy now.

Don't get me wrong, though, I love this little man more than myself. Call him Hank when nobody's around. Kid's got to have a name, don't he?

INTERVIEW WITH DANG NHAT MINH

By Jean-Jacques Malo

Jean-Jacques Malo: *Dang Nhat Minh, you are the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Filmmakers Association. What are your exact duties?*

Dang Nhat Minh: The Vietnamese Filmmakers Association is formed of people who work in filmmaking: directors, screenwriters, directors of photography, cameramen, actors, etc. There are more than six hundred members in the Association. A congress takes place every five years and elects the Executive Committee as well as the General Secretary. The aim of our Association is to help filmmakers in every field, especially the creation of movies, to help them become better professionals, but also in their private life. If someone has a lot of difficulties in his or her daily life, we try to help.

J.-J.M.: *You are also a writer. What do you write?*

D.N.M.: I write short stories. This is my favorite literary genre. I like both cinema and literature. They are the same. I think they are twin brothers.

J.-J.M.: *You have directed fiction films and documentaries. How many fiction movies and how many documentaries have you made?*

D.N.M.: I started my movie career as a documentary director and after five years I started making fictions pictures. I directed several documentaries and seven fiction films.

J.-J.M.: *How do you manage to perform your duties as General Secretary of the Filmmakers Association and your work as a writer? You must be quite busy, mustn't you?*

D.N.M.: Not really because I think my main job is to be a filmmaker, a director. This is the most important for me. And now and again I write short stories. My position as General Secretary is temporary. We help our member, especially our young members to make their ideas come true. We defend the right to be a creator for every member of our Association.

J.-J.M.: *Were you a soldier during the war?*

D.N.M.: No, I was not a soldier, but I was a war correspondent on the front.

J.-J.M.: *Many Vietnamese directors fought against the French or the Americans, they were soldiers. Do you know the proportion of veterans among film directors?*

D.N.M.: I know a few directors who fought against the French and the Americans. I think they are very good directors. They know how to recreate details, atmospheres and very realistic situations.

J.-J.M.: *Which are the American movies on the war that you can see in Vietnam?*

D.N.M.: You can see films such as Platoon. Everybody had the chance to see it.

J.-J.M.: *Was it a popular film among the Vietnamese people?*

D.N.M.: I think many people saw this movie. However, I don't know if people really liked it. Filmmakers had the opportunity to see Apocalypse Now. Francis Coppola gave a copy of his picture as a gift to Vietnamese filmmakers.

J.-J.M.: *In Vietnamese films about the French and the American wars, heroism and humanitarian aspects are very important. Are these two points artistic values in Vietnamese cinema?*

D.N.M.: The humanitarian aspect, yes. It is characteristic of war films made during the conflicts but not any more.

J.-J.M.: *Before 1975 movies stressed battles, the front, the role of soldiers. Patriotism is very developed, one fights against foreign invaders and is ready to die for the motherland.* What was the finality of this type of militant cinema?

D.N.M.: You can see this militant cinema in Nguyen Hon Sen's The Abandoned Field — Free Fire Zone made in 1979. This is a very typical war film. However, I think this time is now over. Today's new generation deals differently with the war in their movies, they have another vision; it's not as in The Abandoned Field.

J.-J.M.: *What are the plot and stylistic changes that appeared after the unification of the country in 1975?*

D.N.M.: After 1975, war as a theme is less and less frequent in the Vietnamese production. Instead, the emphasis is put on daily life, relationships within society and mostly social problems.

J.-J.M.: *Many extracts from documentaries were used in war movies. Why is that?*

D.N.M.: The majority of Vietnamese directors originally worked on documentaries. They were cameramen. For example, Nguyen Hon Sen, the director of The Abandoned Field, was a documentary operator. This explains the very strong documentary influence in Vietnamese fiction films.

J.-J.M.: *In which foreign countries have Vietnamese films been shown?*

D.N.M.: In nearly all the countries of the former socialist countries. First in the ex-Soviet Union, in Eastern Germany, In Czechoslovakia, in Poland, in Hungary. Mostly in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Germany.

J.-J.M.: *And what about Western Europe ? Some films were shown there, weren't they?*

D.N.M.: Yes, for example at the Three Continent Film Festival in Nantes in France. Vietnam cinema is regularly featured in this festival. Other movies were shown at the Berlin festival, the Leipzig festival, as well as in Hawaii in 1987 and 1989. In the U.S.A. as part of the Vietnam Film Project. And now also in Japan.

J.-J.M.: *According to you, what are the main differences between Hollywood and Vietnamese cinema regarding the war?*

D.N.M.: In Hollywood reality becomes spectacular. War is spectacular and you can admire it. But in Vietnamese films you don't see such spectacular images of the war. War penetrates the feelings of the people. In American pictures war is exterior whereas in Vietnamese films it is interior. It's the opposite.

J.-J.M.: *Therefore it's a stylistic difference?*

D.N.M.: Exactly.

J.-J.M.: *And what about today? Do you still find echoes of the war in Vietnam cinema?*

D.N.M.: Yes, you do, but simply echoes. The young generation deals with the war from another perspective.

J.-J.M.: *Do you think that during the war, right after and even today, filmmakers are responsible for showing the importance of these historical aspects in Vietnam?*

D.N.M.: Yes, I think these historical events are shown too rarely on the screen. I believe it's a duty for older directors but a lot of them are now retired and don't work any more. The young generation doesn't know the wars well and therefore cannot show it well.

J.-J.M.: *They are not direct witnesses.*

D.N.M.: Exactly. The weakness of our cinema comes from the fact that we don't have typical movies on the war. We only have small bits like that. We don't have a total vision.

J.-J.M.: *Can films help foreign countries to better understand Vietnam?*

D.N.M.: Yes, of course. Despite the lack of technical means, Vietnamese films can bring western audiences to better understand the truth about life in Vietnam.

J.-J.M.: *Before the unification of the country in 1975, what were the differences between movies from South Vietnam and North Vietnam?*

D.N.M.: In the South, you mean under the Thieu régime, don't you? After the unification I saw many films made under the Thieu régime. They are commercial ventures. They made few films about daily life and the war. These are pictures adapted from films made in Hong-Kong and Taiwan.

J.-J.M.: *Between 1959 and 1972, North Vietnam produced 375 fiction films. Do you know how many dealt with the war and how many treated the life of the Vietnamese people?*

D.N.M.: Most dealt with the war but nowadays very few do, far too few.

J.-J.M.: *You think there are too few?*

D.N.M.: Far too few, yes.

J.-J.M.: *These are very recent historical events.*

D.N.M.: Very recent and today's audience doesn't like to see the past on the screen. They don't like the painful past.

J.-J.M.: *Working conditions are very hard for Vietnamese filmmakers, mostly due to the lack of means, mainly technical, when you compare with conditions in the West...*

D.N.M.: Mostly financial means.

J.-J.M.: *Then, why carry on making films under such difficult conditions?*

D.N.M.: Because in spite of all the difficulties we still manage to make movies. During the war we had no technical means but we still fought. It is our job as filmmakers. We cannot live without working on films because we love them.

J.-J.M.: *In 1991, Vietnam produced 22 fiction pictures and imported 189 movies. Where do these foreign films come from, and what genres are they?*

D.N.M.: These are videos. Films from Hong-Kong and Taiwan. There are also pirated videos. There are many of them. You can find 400 such videos. There is only one copy of each feature film. For example, after 100, 200 showings in Hong-Kong, you cannot show the films anymore. Then, a copy is sold to Vietnam to make money, but it's bad quality.

J.-J.M.: *Are the plots interesting?*

D.N.M.: No. For movie professionals these films are not interesting. Distributors buy them according to the taste of the audience, not for professionals.

J.-J.M.: *What is the importance of video and television in Vietnam today?*

D.N.M.: Film is very expensive, consequently today most people prefer to shoot fiction movies in video, mostly because it's far less expensive. This way you can make a lot of money. However, the artistic quality is very, very bad. As for television, it's free, state-run and state-funded. But the networks don't pay for the films they broadcast. They don't buy them because after a three year-run in theaters, films can be shown on TV without copyrights being paid. This is the case for the two Vietnamese channels. There is also a channel from the former Soviet Union.

J.-J.M.: *What has been the influence of market economy in recent years on the independence of Vietnamese cinema?*

D.N.M.: The pressure is too strong. For example, many private producers control everything. They choose the scripts according to their tastes and ask directors to avoid dealing with such or such aspect of a story. Directors just have to obey if they want to make films. It's really awful.

J.-J.M.: *What you mean is that filmmakers don't have any real freedom?*

D.N.M.: Not regarding financing, it only depends on producers. Now producers and theater owners run the movie business.

J.-J.M.: *Theater owners as well?*

D.N.M.: Exactly. For example, you're a producer, you give me money to shoot a film, but afterward you have to negotiate with a theater owner to distribute your picture. If the theater owner doesn't like the film, if it's not commercial, he won't buy it because he won't make money. There are many sad things in life and now people go to the movies to see happy stories. They don't like films that make them think a lot. As it is distributors have a lot of power.

J.-J.M.: *You mean that today's audience wants to be entertained and is not very interested in artistic or intellectual moviemaking?*

D.N.M.: I cannot say exactly, but today's audience is mostly made up of young urban people and not people from the country. According to polls the majority of filmgoers are teenagers aged between 13 and 18, and they don't like serious films. They go to the movies to be entertained, not to think. Most of the Vietnamese intellectuals don't go to the movies any more.

J.-J.M.: *Is that really the case?*

D.N.M.: Yes, theaters are too dirty ; for example, people eat in theaters. They are not cultural places anymore. It's awful and that's one reason why intellectuals don't like to go to movies anymore. In Vietnam, movie theaters are places where young people wear jeans, sweaters, where

they go for entertainment. They are not intellectual places anymore.

J.-J.M.: *Is it a change compared to ten or fifteen years ago?*

D.N.M.: Of course. Nowadays theater owners don't' want to improve showings. In 1992 I went to Ho-Chi-Minh-Ville for the premiere of Jean-Jacques Annaud's The Lover that was taking place at the Rex theater. It's a big theater. I was there in 1975-76, right after the unification, right after the liberation of Saigon. Then, I go back to this theater sixteen years later. When I walked in the screen was not clean, it was not white anymore. It was dirty. They don't try and keep up the theaters in good condition. There is not one single theater equipped with stereo sound. There is only mono sound. It's terrible.

J.-J.M.: *What is the influence of politics on cinema in particular and on culture in general?*

D.N.M.: In Vietnam politics penetrates every field. Movies as well as literature.

J.-J.M.: *Is ideological supervision still present in art?*

D.N.M.: I don't think so. Ideology respects more and more the specificity of art because it's independent. Politics and art are two different things. Art has got its duties, its goals. I think that's why nowadays politics doesn't have a lot of influence in art.

J.-J.M.: *Then, would you say that artistic autonomy exists?*

D.N.M.: No, I cannot say there is artistic autonomy. We have some freedom to develop our ideas in films. We have a space, but it would be too much to talk about autonomy. We have an artistic space to present our ideas.

J.-J.M.: *Where there any changes in the movie industry after the liberalization of 1987?*

D.N.M.: Yes, after 1987, after doi moi, we had a favorable situation to make films. But there are always misunderstandings, a lack of trust between artists and leaders. I think this happens all the time.

J.-J.M.: *At the end of your film When the Tenth Month Comes, the young soldier tells Duyen that she was right to hide the truth to her father-in-law. It seems there is a message there. Do you believe that films should convey messages?*

D.N.M.: Yes, of course. I believe there should be a message in every movie. When I write short stories, it's a different kind of message. Every film should convey a message.

J.-J.M.: *But don't you think that movies can also be just entertainment? Or should they be entertainment with a message?*

D.N.M.: I think that to have a good time, to relax, you can listen to music, you can go for a walk; you can do many things. But you should not go to the movies for that. I believe you should learn something about life when you go to the pictures.

J.-J.M.: *So you believe cinema should have an intellectual approach?*

D.N.M.: Yes, I believe it should.

J.-J.M.: *An intellectual and militant approach or simply an intellectual approach?*

D.N.M.: Intellectual. Movies are not made to militate, to argue for something.

J.-J.M.: *In your 1988 film, The Girl on the River, Nguyet, the main character, is betrayed by a hero of the revolution, who after the war is a high ranking official...*

D.N.M.: He turned his back on the people who helped him a lot and who trusted him and believed in him.

J.-J.M.: *Then, did you mean to criticize bureaucracy through this revolutionary who does not fit with the desires of the people?*

D.N.M.: No, I did not mean to criticize bureaucracy. I only wanted to say what I think, show what I see in life. Obviously, it's a phenomenon that also existed in our country after the war.

J.-J.M.: *Is it because power eventually corrupts?*

D.N.M.: No. As an artist I would like to relieve the suffering of the people. I like the people best. I think it's my message, my duty.

J.-J.M.: *So you believe one should also criticize when necessary?*

D.N.M.: Most certainly. I mean, I defend something and I criticize something else. Because a director must be on the people's side and all who suffer. I hate to see the poor suffer.

J.-J.M.: *The heroine, Nguyet, is close to nature. She seems to represent innocence. You put an emphasis on the beauty of the countryside that seems to possess an important strength, a regenerating strength. There seems to be an opposition between nature — represented by the country — and the town.*

D.N.M.: I shot this film in Hue, in the North, where nature predominates over the town. In Hue nature looks virgin.

J.-J.M.: *Actually nature is part of daily life for the people in Hue.*

D.N.M.: Yes, it's part of their daily life. The river is life.

J.-J.M.: *So it's a character of this area's life.*

D.N.M.: Of course, the river is one of the characters.

J.-J.M.: *This film was quite popular in Vietnam.*

D.N.M.: Yes, it was not popular abroad but it was successful in Vietnam.

J.-J.M.: *Then, how do you explain its success in Vietnam and not abroad?*

D.N.M.: First, many people in Vietnam saw this film because it dealt with a problem dear to the Vietnamese at the time. It was also shown abroad. British television broadcast it, and it was also part of The Best Films of Asia program.

J.-J.M.: *Do you think that a movie dealing with this theme would be as successful today?*

D.N.M.: I cannot guess the future but today you could not make such a film.

J.-J.M.: *Because of technical and financial means?*

D.N.M.: No, because of the situation in our country. Because of many things.

J.-J.M.: *As I understand there were some problems when the film was released in Hue. What happened?*

D.N.M.: There were no problems with the audience. Everybody could see it.

J.-J.M.: *But weren't there problems with the authorities?*

D.N.M.: A few leaders didn't like the picture.

J.-J.M.: *Why?*

D.N.M.: They criticized it, however, there was no censorship. Everybody could go and see it in theaters. But a few Vietnamese leaders criticized the film publicly. I think every moviegoer, like you, like me, has a right to criticize. We like or we dislike a picture. It's everybody's right.

J.-J.M.: *Does censorship still exist in the Vietnamese film industry?*

D.N.M.: Of course it does. But I cannot tell you that censorship is there. It's something like the air. You cannot see it because there are no rules. It depends on the opinion of every member of the censorship committee. What is a pornographic film? A violent film? There are no rules.

J.-J.M.: *You mean censorship can change according to every member of the committee?*

D.N.M.: Yes. When a film is presented to the censorship committee, there are five, seven persons. They watch it and then everybody writes their opinion. Then, a representative of the committee gathers all the opinions, prepares a summary, then presents it to the vice-minister for culture who decides if the movie is to be released or not. You may have to alter something, to change details.

J.-J.M.: *Are directors occasionally asked to alter some scenes?*

D.N.M.: Some scenes, yes. You also have to make cuts when the authorities believe that some scenes are not useful to society. But what does it mean, not useful? It depends on your point of view. There are no precise rules.

J.-J.M.: *In your other film The Town within Reach that you made in 1982, you criticize the cultural revolution. What were the effects of the cultural revolution in Vietnam?*

D.N.M.: You know, historically there were many influences between China and Vietnam. For example, the weather. When it's cold in China, two or three days later it's cold in Vietnam. And during the Chinese revolution there was an influence in Vietnam. Nonetheless, we did not have a cultural revolution. However, there is still an influence in daily life, in the life of the people.

J.-J.M.: *Is it an influence that comes from China?*

D.N.M.: Many elements of the Chinese revolution relate to China. But our country is a small country. We couldn't manage to complete the things as they did in China. When you do something, you should go to the end. In Vietnam we only go half-way, that's all. I wanted to explain what happens in life under such an influence. That's all. The aim of the film is not to criticize China but it's a way to accuse characters.

J.-J.M.: *Therefore you mean to criticize only one character in this film.*

D.N.M.: In this film, yes. It's a way to bring an accusation against a career-minded coward. You may fear many things, for example, there might be spies around you. Cowardice can lead you to advance your career. But in fact, you have to tell the truth. You should love your wife, your children.

J.-J.M.: *You believe the past should not be rejected, it should be accepted in daily life and also for the future?*

D.N.M.: You have to study the past to prepare the future.

J.-J.M.: *There is a quest in many North-Vietnamese films. At the beginning characters seem ignorant and at the end they have made a personal discovery, they are better*

people, usually thanks to somebody else. Characters who are, let's say mistaken, are helped by others to see the light and by the end of the story they are better citizens, they are more useful to society. Is it a common narrative tendency in Vietnamese films?

D.N.M.: Yes, maybe. It's a tendency, socialist realism. However, I'm not sure what is exactly socialist realism. If you asked creative people, for example, writers, screenwriters, theater artists, etc., what is socialist realism, I think everybody will define it with only one sentence: at the end you have to be positive, happy. That's all. It's a sign. Theories are nothing. That's why at the end of pictures the main character makes progress and is a better human being.

J.-J.M.: *One of the main differences between Vietnamese and Western cinema is the fact that in your stories the "villains" don't seem to be automatically rejected by society that tries to bring them back in her bosom, whereas in Western cinema villains are really bad and they are completely rejected by society.*

D.N.M.: Yes, and I think that all Western films are like that. In Vietnamese cinema there is also such a characteristic feature. If you're bad, you're bad until the end. From beginning to end. If you're good, you have no flaws . It's a disease.

J.-J.M.: *You think it's a disease?*

D.N.M.: Yes, a disease. Far too common.

J.-J.M.: *And what are your current projects regarding both filmmaking and writing?*

D.N.M.: I have a lot of projects but I'd like to carry on making films whose main characters are peasants. I'd like to make a film in the country.

J.-J.M.: *Yet you're not from a peasant family?*

D.N.M.: No. I'm not from a peasant family. I think 80%, 90% even, of the people in Vietnam are peasants. There are too few films on peasants.

J.-J.M.: *You mean you want to restore a balance.*

D.N.M.: Yes, and as I said, the plot of When the Tenth Month Comes takes place in the country. Now I would like to go back to the country, to deal the life of the peasants. I think that with this approach you can tackle issues more common in today's Vietnamese society. But now with the market economy, private producers prefer to finance different kinds of movies. They say that moviegoers are poor. That's why they go to the cinema but not to see poverty on the screen. They want to see films with class, with hotels, villas. They want to dream. It's awful.

J.-J.M.: *There is a tendency in every national cinema, whatever the country, to avoid showing reality. Are you more interested in reality?*

D.N.M.: I think of reality. I believe that today a kind of Italian neo-realism is still alive.

J.-J.M.: *You mean this Italian-type neo-realism is to be found in Vietnam?*

D.N.M.: Yes, it's still alive in cultural productions.

J.-J.M.: *Would you like to make a film in the West, in France, for example?*

D.N.M.: No. I like France a lot but I'd like to travel abroad, not to make movies. I don't think so. Because now I think of the country, of the peasants.

J.-J.M.: *Your artistic interest lies in Vietnam, in your native country.*

D.N.M.: First of all, I don't think a coproduction would be possible. For example, you cannot make a good film with two directors, a Vietnamese one and a foreign one. I believe a movie is like an individual message. You cannot give it with somebody else.

J.-J.M.: *You mean a film should only have one director?*

D.N.M.: Of course.

J.-J.M.: *What about the script? Can a script be written by several persons, a team? It's quite common in France, in the U.S.A., in Great Britain. There are two, three, sometimes five screenwriters.*

D.N.M.: No, I don't think so. Maybe you can make a film with five screenwriters but your message is a bad one. You can write a letter to a woman, to your wife, but she cannot write it with her husband, together. This letter may have some flaws, but it comes from the heart, from the heart of a man, or a woman. I would like to get to know the audience. I would like it to love me. This is why I write my own letter to the audience as I would to a woman. It's a direct message that I send to the audience.

WHOSE VIETNAM? THE REPRESENTATION OF THE VIETNAMESE IN OLIVER STONE'S *HEAVEN AND EARTH*

David Callaghan

With the release of *Heaven and Earth*, the third film in his Vietnam trilogy, director Oliver Stone has returned to the site of his earlier Academy Award winning triumphs. After a spate of high-profile films about Vietnam during the 1980s, cinematic recreations of the war seemed to have waned by the end of the decade. With the recent lifting of America's trade embargo with Vietnam, however, Vietnam is once again in the news. This renewed interest coincided with Stone's film, which purports to approach the war from a radically different perspective—namely, that of the Vietnamese themselves.

Like Stone's *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*, previous American made films about Vietnam have focused on the plight of Americans during and after the war. While such self-absorption is understandable on many levels, these films have consistently failed to acknowledge the impact of the war on the Vietnamese as well.

The Hollywood war film has a long tradition of representing foreigners as The Other, and celluloid depictions of the Vietnamese (both North and South) have indulged in similarly sinister and marginalized constructions. Leo Cawley of the *Village Voice* (himself a Vietnam veteran) described this narcissistic focus as "suiting the national character depressingly well," (Cawley 21) while a cover story on Oliver Stone and *Platoon* in *Time* magazine criticized the Vietnam war film genre as follows: "... the Vietnamese are either pathetic or victims or the invisible human enemy. In the scheme of *Platoon* (and not just *Platoon*) they do not matter. The nearly 1 million Vietnamese casulties are deemed trivial compared with America's loss of innocence ... And the tragedy of Vietnam is seen as this: not that they died, but that we debased ourselves by killing them" (Corliss 58).

Thus, the recreation of the Vietnam experience on film has created a discourse in which the war is continually evaluated through the lens of American experience. Consequently, as Jeffrey Walsh and James Aulich point out in their preface to *Vietnam Images*, an entire post-1960s generation has now experienced Vietnam "second hand" via the overly familar images (i.e., helicopters, body bags, booby traps, etc.) depicted in various pop culture mediums, including films (Walsh and Aulich ix). These fictional representations of the war and the Vietnamese people offer a surrogate experience of the conflict which is priviliged as "reality" by both film makers and film goers. A notorious example is *The Deer Hunter*, in which the Northern Vietnamese are portrayed as sadists who force their American captives to engage in Russian roulette. As Walsh and Aulich note, "the image freezes the reality of the Vietnam conflict, distances its actual history, estranges the viewer from important moral issues, and refocuses the war so as to make scapegoats of the Vietnamese" (2). One result of the repitition of these common tropes has been the cinematic construction of a monolithic Vietnamese Other, "offering audiences flash segments of a culture and people that have been narrowed down to categories of victims, prostitutes, snipers, and a race of people who do not have the same 'regard for human life' as westerners" (Hong 1). Thus, in many cases this American lens of perception is often a distorted one, albeit mistakenly priviliged as fact or as a singular reality.

The intent of *Heaven and Earth* then is to go beyond an examination of the war in strictly American terms by viewing it from the "fresh" perspective of the traditionally absent or marginalized Vietnamese Other. Based on the two volume memoirs of Vietnamese refugee Le Ly Hayslip, the film also marks a departure for Stone in terms of its emphasis on a female protagonist. The pre-release publicity for *Heaven and Earth* emphasized the novelty of its perspective, with *Entertainment Weekly* actually touting it as "the first major American movie to examine the Vietnam War from a Vietnamese perspective..." (Hajari 42). Hayslip herself expressed initial caution about Stone's interest in her story, noting the plethora of works expressing an American viewpoint as well as a fear that Stone "would rewrite my story the way he wanted to see it" (Klapwald 22H). While the film is a departure for Stone in some ways, I would contend that it does not in fact depict a "Vietnamese perspective." It is true that *Heaven and Earth* examines the experience of a Vietnamese woman, which is a first for Hollywood, but Hayslip's life is still filtered through the perspective of an American director—himself a male veteran of the war. As with any director, what Stone ultimately offers for the viewer is his own very personal *interpretation* of Hayslip's memoirs. Regardless of Stone's faithfulness to Hayslip's story, or the depth of her involvement with the film, it must invariably reflect his directorial (and undeniably American) vision to a significant degree. In short, any claims about the film's non-Western frame and breakthrough representation of "Othered" identities are rather shaky, if not in fact disingenuous. This position is particularly problematic in relation to a number of Vietnamese directed and produced films which were made available for the first time during the release of Stone's film, which shall also be considered in this article.

What *Heaven and Earth* does do is put Stone, noted for his visceral, machismo dominated films, on somewhat unfamiliar cinematic ground. In interviews the director claims that he "would have made the same story , however, if it had been about a man" (Hajari 42). Stone further denies any need for personal atonement as an American soldier as the primary motivation for making the film: "beyond any feelings of guilt, there is an enormous peasant knowledge—a love of the land, a love of ancestors ... we need to know what happened to the peasants of Vietnam" (45). In relation to this question of perspective and representation of identity, does *Heaven and Earth* truly convey the story of the "peasants" in lieu of the traditional focus on the American presence in Vietnam? A further examination of the film reveals a mixed answer, although it depicts life in a Vietnamese

village to a degree previously unseen in mainstream Hollywood cinema.

The episodic plot begins with Hayslip's idyllic childhood in her village, which is soon ravaged by the brutality of the French in the 1950s and the Viet Cong and the Americans in the 1960s. Nonetheless, the villagers are shown as sympathizing with the Viet Cong, and Hayslip herself is eventually arrested and tortured by the Southern Vietnamese government for supporting them. While the seemingly harmless peasant masquerading as VC soldier is a common motif of the Hollywood Vietnam genre, *Heaven and Earth* is the first film to extensively probe the appeal of the VC to the larger population in terms of a political context. [1] Viet Cong leaders are shown lecturing on the nationalist nature of their cause, and Hayslip indicates that "if the VC were able to win the people over, it was because they lived their lives among us." Still, Stone does not whitewash the brutality of either side, showing the Cong's savage rape of Hayslip in retaliation for her being released from jail (therefore, she must have betrayed the cause), as well as numerous cold-blooded executions of villagers for various "offenses."

The film also transcends the clichéd constructions of previous Vietnam films in its attention to Hayslip's family life, as well as a respectful (if not overly reverential) representation of the importance of the Buddhist religion in the life of the Vietnamese peasants. Hayslip's mother is depicted as loving but also a fierce patriot who wants her sons to fight for the independence of her homeland, while her protective father vainly attempts to keep his family intact. Her sisters are often jealous of her irresponsibility and "laziness" as the youngest child, and one sister actually throws her into the streets (while pregnant) after a quarrel. This representation of a three-dimensional family unit, squabbles and problems intact, goes far beyond the customary stock depictions of the Vietnamese as Other in Hollywood. In a *New York Times* article evaluating the representation of Vietnamese in American films, Lan Cao (herself a Vietnamese émigré) noted that Hayslip's role as Technical Advisor to Stone "produced a film whose attention to detail gave it authenticity," with various "intimate elements" such as "linguistically correct Vietnamese, including regional accents" balancing some of the film's weaker aspects (Cao 22). To Stone's credit, *Heaven and Earth* offers a fuller, more detailed representation of the Vietnamese than perhaps any other American film to date.

Despite this, the film still indulges in many of the stock tropes of the Vietnam film genre: Vietnamese "boom-boom" girls, callous Americans who exploit the very people they are ostensibly trying to protect, a seemingly kindly soldier (Steve, who eventually marries Hayslip) who turns out to be a guilt-ridden, savage killer, etc. Americans back home are presented as fat-cat capitalist consumers, as when Hayslip's new sister-in-law lectures her about "being grateful" for her processed dinner, or when Steve (Tommy Lee Jones) debates the qualities of "Oriental women" with another relative. While Stone has fun with satirizing middle-class America in the 1960s, once again many of the images seem all-too-familiar from previous films, in some cases not even from the Vietnam pool.[2] Furthermore, for all of her heroism and determination, Hayslip emerges as an oddly unindividualized character; perhaps resulting from Stone's continual representation of her as a passive victim. From Stone's point of view, "the character Tommy Lee Jones plays is very much like the role we played in Vietnam. We wanted them, we wanted to prop them up, they were our little children, our Oriental wives. At the same time, there was an undercurrent of arrogance, ethnocentricity, racism..." (Kilday 32). While undeniably foregrounding this point in its depiction of Steve and Le Ly's relationship, the film seems to reduce the latter character to a secondary status once the action moves to America. Consequently, Stone reverts to the traditional emphasis on the angst of the returning veteran in these sequences (Steve ultimately kills himself over the horror of his "war crimes" in Vietnam), undercutting his own stated goal of telling "what happened" to Hayslip.

Stone's penchant for creating a striking *mise-en-scene* also works against his intentions to represent the Vietnamese peasant lifestyle faithfully. Hayslip's village, recreated in Thailand, is depicted as an unsullied, pastoral paradise before the encroachment of Western invaders. While the eventual destruction of the village is an undisputed fact, Stone went to great efforts to create an idealized representation of rural Vietnam. Transplanting "super-rice" into Phang Nga in Southern Thailand to realize his directorial vision, Stone told one interviewer that "we made it greener ... we fertilized the shit out of it" (Hajari 42). Again, while few would deny the devestation inflicted on Vietnam by the presence of American troops, Stone's attempts to create a mythological, pre-Western Vietnam does a disservice to his generally noteworthy intentions in *Heaven and Earth*. The creation of an idyllic Vietnam only serves to indulge Stone's directorial virtuosity, as opposed to the much-ballyhooed goal of presenting a Vietnamese perspective on the war. Furthermore, the construction of an idealized Vietnam by an American director seems to reinforce Edward Said's notion that Westerners often approach the East in terms of a historically conditioned "idea" of a fictitious, generalized "Orient" (Said 23).[3]

What then is the end result of Stone's efforts to depict Hayslip's story and the tragedy of the Vietnamese peasantry on film? Surely *Heaven and Earth* goes beyond previous films of the Vietnam war genre, including Stone's own earlier efforts, in portraying the Vietnamese as individualized human beings. Stone's 1985 *Platoon* is generally considered to be one of the most "realistic" Vietnam films in depicting the daily life of the American "grunt" soldiers. Nonetheless, while many Vietnamese refugees living in America praised the film as more accurate than its predecessors (especially those of the "Rambo" ilk), they also perceived it as having little to do with the Vietnamese people. For example,Yen Do, the editor of a Vietnamese newspaper in California, stated that: "it is his personal odyssey in Vietnam... but his film is no more about Vietnam and its people than was *Deer Hunter* or any of the others. This is to be expected. They were made by Americans, for Americans" (Wong 5). This point, perhaps more than any other, underscores the

overall failure of *Heaven and Earth* in achieving its goals. While a well-intentioned effort to present the Vietnam War from the "Other" side, the film is still made " by Americans, for Americans." Thus, despite some of the new ground gained by the film as previously discussed, Stone inevitably indulges in the familiar tropes and images of the Vietnam film genre. As Doan Van Toai, a former Vietnamese student, asks in Lan Cao's *New York Times* article, " can the U.S. make a movie about Vietnam that does not in some way mirror their image?" The answer, at least for Oliver Stone and mainstream American cinema so far, is no (Cao 22).

This point is further emphasized when juxtaposing Hollywood films such as *Heaven and Earth* against the wave of Vietnamese films recently available (often for the first time) to American audiences. Such films include the Oscar nominated *The Scent of Green Papaya*[4] and *The Retired General*, with the latter film exploring the difficulty of an ex-NVA general in adjusting to what he percieves as a surprisingly corrupt and materialistic post-war society.[5] Perhaps the most striking of these films in relation to the war itself was the series entitled "*Of Love and War—Cinema of Vietnam.*"[6] Produced under the auspices of Asian Cinevision, the series offered six films made in Vietnam from 1974 to the present which explored various themes relating to war and post-war Vietnamese society. In her program notes, Exhibition Director Minne Jung-Min Hong noted the proliferation of American films since 1975 offering a "complicated range" of "cinematic interpretations" of the war. Furthermore, she reiterated the position that these films, including Stone's trilogy, examined Vietnam as part of a mythic American landscape:

> In American films..., Vietnam is a psychological landscape of unresolved anguish, a place where we face the deepest horrors of inhumanity, and test out the American will for survival. And yet, the history of Vietnam, the culture traditions, and strengths of the Vietnamese people, have spanned far more than its brief twentieth century encounter with the United States. Through the upheavals of invasion, French colonization, and revolution, Vietnam has also survived the war, and emerged with a truly breathtaking, and very human, cinematic record of its triumphs (Hong 1).

Thus, these black and white films offer a range of interpretations which, unlike the Hollywood films, do represent a variety (as opposed to the frequent Western depiction of a monolithic Asian Other) of Vietnamese perspectives on the war. Hong's notes also point out the American cultural penchant for viewing the history of Vietnam in relation to the relatively brief period of the American presence there, when in fact the Vietnamese have been engaged in nationalist struggles for hundreds of years.

Ironically, wartime films like *The Little Girl of Hanoi* (1974) in this series often depict Americans as the Other. The film involves a young girl's (Ma) search for her soldier father in Hanoi during severe bombings of the city by American planes. In flashbacks, we discover that her mother died during while trying to save children in a kindergarten which was hit by American bombs (in the same attack, Ma's baby sister is seriously wounded). As Ma sifts through the rubble of her former home, captured American piliots are marched through her neighborhood. From the Vietnamese perspective, the Americans are the savages, the baby-killers; and the nameless soldiers are presented as a group of uncivilized murderers as Ma's neighbors attack the men who have destroyed their homes. Another striking moment occurs when a woman later comforts a crying baby by assuring her of her safety, despite the fact that "Nixon wants to kill you." The film depicts its soldiers as brave patriots valiantly stuggling to free their homeland from foreign aggression,and Ma's father is presented as a loving parent who must leave his family to serve his country. While the film does reflect an obvious aim of promoting wartime propaganda, the difference in perspective towards defining "the enemy" is illuminating for an American viewer.[7]

Other films such as *The Strolling Singers* (1991) and *Brothers and Relations* (1986) examine the plight of returning Vietnamese veterans, who in many cases have experienced difficulty in adjusting to post-war Vietnamese society (not unlike their American counterparts). *The Strolling Singers*, for example, presents three veterans who must sing on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City to make a living, and uses documentary footage of actual veterans who work as street singers to help dramatize this reality.[8] Conversely, *When the Tenth Month Comes* (1984) depicts the struggle of a grieving Vietnamese widow to come to terms with the death of her soldier husband. While these films explore a variety of experiences, issues, and perspectives, what was most striking for me as an American viewer (exposed only to Hollywood representations of the Vietnamese) was the complex depiction of *real*, three-dimensional people with all of their human flaws and foibles intact. In these films, the Vietnamese people live in a world with families, laws, friendships, and relationships—just like Americans! And, although characters lie, cheat, and make mistakes as in real life, they are not represented as whores, evil torturers, or smiling, congenial simpletons.[9] While all of the films explore various facets of the Vietnamese experience, of course, it is rather ironic that many of their themes (i.e., the returning veteran) are already familar to American audiences; but only in context of Hollywood's emphasis on the American presence in Vietnam.

In conclusion, unlike *Heaven and Earth* and its predecessors, the growing number of American released Vietnamese-made films provide a cinematic representation of Vietnam and its people which transcends the American tradition of viewing the war and its aftermath from its own perspective. Despite Oliver Stone's best intentions, *Heaven and Earth* reinscribes many of the stock tropes and constructions of previous Hollywood films about Vietnam, which is perhaps inevitable for an American director (no matter the basis of his or her material) in grappling with the Vietnam experience. And regardless of the extensive number of films about the Vietnam War, several facets of the subject, including the representation of the Vietnamese, have still been ignored, misrepresented, or given only minimal attention. As Stone himself said before the film was released, "it

certainly occurred to me that no American would want to see this film" (Hajari 42). Another area of absence is noted by Albert Auster and Leonard Quart in their book *How the War was Remembered* , in that the American film industry has yet to make a film which examines the causes of the war in its political and social context (Auster and Quart 147). Similarly, Hollywood has yet to provide a film which, in Yen Do's words, depicts a "full, realistic" representation of the Vietnamese experience during the conflict. In 1987, the former Vietnamese refugee and now California based editor predicted that "it is still too soon for such a film. Maybe it will take another 10 years, probably much more" (Wong 5). While I am skepical that an American film can in fact provide such an account, certainly the Vietnamese films discussed in this article (as well as others which have not yet become available for American audiences) construct a more diverse and individualistic representation of war and post-war Vietnam and its people than does their American counterparts—including Oliver Stone's *Heaven and Earth*.

Notes

1 Eric Weston's 1988 film *The Iron Triangle* also considers this issue, but is still presented from the traditional viewpoint of an American soldier. There are also several independently produced documentaries (such as Emile de Antonio's 1968 *The Year of the Pig* and Peter Davis's 1974 *Hearts and Minds*) which address the isue from a decidedly pro-Viet Cong perspective.

2 For example, the scene where Hayslip first encounters an American supermarket echoes a similar moment in Paul Mazursky's *Moscow on the Hudson*.

3 In addition, see Said's *Culture and Imperialism*.

4 Directed by Tran Anh Hung, the film's emphasis on life in Saigon before the arrival of American troops stands in contrast to American depictions of Vietnam. In the Hollywood worldview, the Vietnamese people and their culture seem to exist only in relation to the American presence there.

5 Directed by Nguyen Khac Loi, the film was presented at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City (17 February 1994) as part of a series entitled *A Program of Films from Vietnam*.

6 This series was presented at Cinema Village (January 1994) in New York City.

7 The Exhibition House of Aggression War Crimes in Ho Chi Minh City, which documents American "war crimes" in Vietnam, offers yet another decidedly Vietnamese perspective on the Conflict.

8. See Series Program, 12 and 13.

9. Unlike American films such as Barry Levinson's 1987 *Good Morning Vietnam*, in which Vietnamese adults are represented as smiling, child-like clowns. Another film not mentioned in this article which offers a richer depiction of Vietnam beyond the stereotyping of American directed films is Thi Thanh Nga's *From Hollywood to Hanoi*.

Works Cited

Auster, Albert and Leonard Quart. *How the War was Remembered: Hollywood & Vietnam*. New York: Praeger, 1988.

Cao, Lan. "The Details are Vietnamese, The Vision, Guilty American." *New York Times* 23 January 1994: Section 2,13 and 22.

Cawley, Leo. "Refighting the War." *Village Voice* 8 September 1988: 18-23.

Corliss, Richard. "*Platoon* : Vietnam, The Way it Really Was." *Time* 26 January 1987: 54-61.

Hajari, Nisid. "Stone Angel." *Entertainment Weekly* 19 November 1993: 40-45.

Hong, Minne Jung-Min. "Welcoming Statement." *Of Love and War: Cinema of Vietnam* 21-27 January 1994: New York City. Program. Personal Collection of the Author.

Kilday, Gregg. "Oliver Stoned." *Entertainment Weekly* 14 January 1994: 28-33.

Klapwald, Thea. "Two Survivors Turn Hell Into 'Heaven and Earth'." *New York Times* 19 December 1993: 22H.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Random House, 1978.

——. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.

Walsh, Jeffrey and James Aulich, eds. *Vietnam Images*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.

Wong, Herman. "Viet Refugees Give "Platoon" Good Reviews." *Los Angeles Times* 25 January 1987: Calendar,1-7 and 38-39.

IMAGES OF VIETNAMESE IN AMERICAN FILM: THE MAFIA AND THE SUPER-CAPITALISTS

Renny Christopher, English Department, California State University at Stanislaus, Turlock, CA 95382.

Images of Vietnamese in U.S. films about the American war in Viet Nam have always drawn from a stock set of images of Asians, established as early as the Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu movies of the thirties, and honed to stereotype and cliché in four decades of WWII movies portraying Japanese. Almost no American film deviates from these shallow, predetermined portrayals of generic Asians. Now, American films are beginning to portray the years following the war, and to take notice of the presence of Vietnamese refugees in America. This paper will address four films of this type. One of them is a mainstream Hollywood film, *Alamo Bay* (1985, directed by Louis Malle), the other three are B movies of a particularly interesting new subgenre. Despite the difference in overall "quality" of these films, however, *Alamo* Bay and the three B movies share at least one cliche about Asians: that they are super-industrious ultra-capitalists.

In *Alamo Bay*, the industry of the immigrant fishermen, their willingness to work harder than the native Texans, causes the two groups to come into conflict over fishing rights.

This film is unique in that it tries to deal seriously with Vietnamese/Euro-American relations. Interestingly, it was made by a French, not an American, director, although Malle made the film for an American studio. It was inspired by real events that took place on the Gulf Coast of Texas, 1979-81. The main characters are Dinh, a newly-arrive refugee, Glory, who helps her father, Wally, run his wholesale shrimp business, and her married lover, Shang, a Viet Nam vet who is about to have his new shrimping boat repossessed by the bank. Dinh, a "Saigon fancy boy," is taken in by the Vietnamese community, and learns shrimping. There is tension between the Vietnamese American and Euro-American shrimpers. When a warden gives Ben, a Vietnamese, a citation for illegally shrimping at night, Dinh asks for a book of rules. The warden refuses him.

Wally tells the warden that he trades with the Vietnamese because "immigration ran off all my good Mexicans." Louis, the one Mexican American who works for Wally, tells Dinh, "This is a gringo bay." A KKK organizer tries to organize a "public relations" campaign to drive out the Vietnamese, but Shang offers a violent alternative. Armed patrols of boats with men in KKK robes and Confederate flags flying drive the Vietnamese fishermen from the bay. After a cross-burning in the Vietnamese trailer park, all the Vietnamese, except Dinh and Ben, leave town. Dinh talks Glory into renting him a boat and staying in business. Shang and two other men burn the boat. Ben shoots one of Shang's boys; Shang shoots Ben. Glory returns just as Shang is beating Dinh to death; Glory picks up his gun and shoots Shang.

The film is devastating in its portrayal of deep American ignorance of politics: at a town meeting a woman proclaims, "My boy fought the VC over there, and now they're right here in Texas taking the bread out of our mouths." Of course these Vietnamese were not the enemies, but rather the allies of the U.S. The film shows that the trouble is that these immigrants are not too different from the Americans, but rather too similar—they are budding capitalists. Dinh's ambition is to own his own boat, run his own business. A minister at the town meeting suggests to the Vietnamese priest that perhaps the problems could be solved if only the Vietnamese wouldn't work so hard. The film does contain eloquent scenes of people who do physical work; the scenes show both the dignity and the cost of that work. The film also shows a marked contrast between the working styles of the immigrants, who fish in groups, in dilapidated boats, hauling in the nets by hand, and the Euro-Americans, like Shang, who works alone on a large, expensive boat, pulling in his nets with a hydraulic winch.

Shang is portrayed as a stereotypical redneck, complete with gunrack on his truck, baseball cap with a confederate flag, and a tattoo on his arm, who says to his wife, "You got knocked up so I'd marry you, then you knocked yourself up again." It's hard to understand Glory's attraction to him. Dinh, on the other hand, is trying to assimilate. He says, "Howdy," and "Have a nice day." He buys a cowboy hat, and teaches the Vietnamese kids how to play baseball.

The film could have been much stronger and less enmeshed in stereotypes had it played out the situation it almost sets up, the love triangle among Shang, Glory, and Dinh, but it can't quite transcend its own boundaries. Dinh is obviously attracted to Glory, and he names his boat after her. When Shang questions Glory about Dinh she says, "he's just some kid that works for me," denying any possible sexual attraction between them by emphasizing the age difference. But Dinh is clearly not a kid; he is an adult. Shang replies, "Do you go down on him, too?" revealing his sexual jealousy, and his basic possessiveness: he does not want to share "his" bay, or "his" woman with any Vietnamese. However, the film remains careful not to let the Glory-Dinh leg of the triangle develop. Glory's attitude toward Dinh remains something like a female version of paternalism. When she shoots Shang at the end of the film, she is clearly not choosing Dinh over Shang as a romantic partner. Thus the film reveals its own limitations, its own rootedness in the endemic racism with which first world people tend to view third world people.

The film also fails to truly humanize the Vietnamese community. While Dinh is a major, and sympathetic, character, none of the other Vietnamese characters play a significant role. The glimpses the film gives into the Vietnamese community keep the viewer at a distance, partially because the Vietnamese characters always speak in Vietnamese, and no subtitles are provided. So, although it stands alone among American films in taking notice of the Vietnamese immigrant community in a serious and sympathetic way, it, too, fails to truly tran-

scend the same old-same old characterizations of Asian characters.

Recently a spate of B movies have alleged the presence of a "Vietnamese Mafia" in the U.S. Like the crazy-vet subgenre of B movies popular in the 70s, these movies bring the war onto U.S. soil. Unlike those movies, in this new genre, the veteran always gets to win. Ironically, of course, he's now fighting Vietnamese immigrants—that is, former South Vietnamese, who were the U.S.' allies, but who are now presented as having an intricate and inscrutable criminal organization, which, again because of Asian industriousness and ultra-capitalism, threatens "American" interests.

The first, and worst, of these is *Steele Justice* (1987). It begins with a prologue, set in Cu Chi, 1975. Betrayed by ARVN General Kwan on what's supposed to be a "joint operation," Army lieutenant John Steele is wounded. Steele wounds Kwan in order to save his ARVN buddy, Lee. Years later, in southern California, Lee's a cop on the "Asian crime task force." Steele, a cowboy, gets arrested after a run-in with a mistreater of horses. Lee bails him out and takes him home. Lee, his wife and mother are then killed by Pham van Kwan, General Kwan's son, who, with his father, runs the Vietnamese Mafia, the "Black Tigers." Steele saves Lee's daughter. Steele goes after the Kwans. General Kwan has been making a deal to manufacture drugs in his "medical facility." Steele raids an Army weapons testing facility; using the high tech weaponry and his pet viper, he interrupts a drug deal, and kills Pham Van Kwan and the U.S. army colonel who's sold out to the Kwans. Steele and General Kwan duel with Japanese swords; Steele kills Kwan.

Steele Justice portrays the Vietnamese as stock Asian villains. Soon-Teck Oh, a Korean American actor who's played an evil Vietnamese character before (*Missing in Action 2*, where he plays the sadistic POW camp commander) once again plays a generic Asian bad guy; at one point he appears in some sort of a robe that looks more like a dress, and certainly isn't any sort of traditional Vietnamese clothing. He and Steele battle with Japanese swords, and it really seems that the movie doesn't know that Japanese swords are as alien in Viet Nam as in America. The Black Tigers have their insignia and a record of their crime careers tattooed on their backs, making them savage and exotic. And, as usual, the movie has the Vietnamese names all wrong. General Kwan's son has General Kwan's given name, rather than his family name. Kwan is not a Vietnamese name, anyway—it would have to be Quon, since there is no "k" in Vietnamese.

Another film in this genre, *Vietnam, Texas* (1990), completely rewrites history. In it, Tom McCain, a Catholic priest, who had been a soldier in Viet Nam, leaving behind a pregnant girlfriend, is now haunted by flashbacks. He goes to Houston to try to find his child. He gets Max, an army buddy who now runs a bar in Houston's Little Saigon, to lead him to Mailan, who is now married to Wong, a bigshot in the Vietnamese Mafia. Mailan refuses to let McCain see their daughter, Lan; Wong's henchmen beat him up. Mailan is indebted to Wong, because he's buying her family's way out of Viet Nam. McCain gets Minh, a fisherman, to help him, in return for McCain's help intervening with Euro-American fishermen who are trying to keep the Vietnamese fishermen from bringing their fish to market. (Notice that the Vietnamese fishermen are simultaneously super-industrious and completely helpless until helped by the "good" American).

McCain, Max, and Minh steal a crate of heroin from Wong's warehouse and go to the police, but they can't pin anything on Wong, who has an expensive Euro-American lawyer. Minh brings Lan to McCain, who doesn't admit he's her father. Wong's henchmen kill Minh after Max has told them he's meeting Mailan. Wong tries to kill McCain by nailing him to iceblocks in his fish warehouse freezer in a mock crucifiction, thus proving his status as a generic Asian villain in the Fu Manchu style. (His henchmen are also ruthless and inscrutable. At one point they blow up a fish stand and horribly wound the proprietors who have refused to participate in drug smuggling.) Max saves McCain from the freezer and they go to get Lan. Mailan tells Lan that McCain is her father. Wong shoots at McCain, but kills Mailan instead; McCain shoots Wong, thus preserving the stereotype of the tragic Asian woman in the Madame Butterfly mold.

The film is actually very mixed in its portrayal of the Vietnamese. Mailan is presented very seriously; one of the best scenes in the movie is a conversation she has with McCain about why she doesn't want him to see Lan—she's taken care of her daughter, and doesn't want to lose her. "Many Vietnamese women abandoned their mixed children, but I brought my daughter out," she says. She's married Wong so that her daughter will be well-off. Another character, Sammy, is a Vietnamese who wants to be a comic and appear on Johnny Carson. At first he's obnoxious, and not funny, but the character grows as the movie goes on, and when he dies, it's poignant. There are the usual ethnic soup of various Asians playing Vietnamese—from the Cambodian Haing Ngor to the Japanese American Tamlyn Tomita, and various Chinese Americans. The Vietnamese cultural stuff is all wrong, as usual, from the names (Wong is Chinese) to Mailan wearing black to a funeral, to Wong pruning Bonsai trees. (A Vietnamese might do Bonsai as much as a Euro-American might, but this film doesn't seem to know the difference, like *Steele Justice* and its use of Japanese swords).

The film ends with Lan writing in a diary and speaking a voiceover. "In one terrifying instant I had lost my mother and found my real father...and now that we are together I know for the first time who I really am." The whole drive of the movie suggests than an assimilated American identity is the only good identity—that is perhaps why Mailan must die along with the villains. Mention is made about the Vietnamese prejudice against mixed children, and McCain's act of "rescuing" his daughter from the evil Wong, who wants to kill McCain out of jealousy, or some other not quite clear motive, is seen as noble, despite the fact that it's taken him fifteen years to seek his daughter out. The fault for the mistreatment of Amerasian children is put wholly on the Vietnamese in this movie, with no blame on the American fathers who abandoned them.

In the best movie of this sub-genre, *Gleaming the Cube* (1988), Brian and Vinh are suburban teenage brothers—Brian a blond skateboarder, Vinh an adopted Vietnamese who has an after-school job in a Vietnamese video store, working for ex-ARVN colonel Trac, who's shipping "anti-communist relief supplies" to Viet Nam. Vinh discovers irregularities in the shipments; he is caught prying into the medical supplies, and murdered. Brian investigates his death. Brian is pursuing his own identity—he's become a "screw-up" because his brother was too perfect—he was, in fact, the stereotype of the perfect, too-smart Asian student—and now Brian is trying to redeem himself. He cuts his hair, wears his brother's clothes and dates his brother's Vietnamese girlfriend, daughter of Colonel Trac. He discovers that what's being shipped in the "medical crates" is munitions.

Colonel Trac is involved in a movement to overthrow the Vietnamese government. Brian blows up a propane tank at the warehouse, setting it up so Trac's American partner thinks Trac did it. Trac's daughter finds out and tells her father; Trac wants to forgive and let the war be over, but his American partner wants to kill Brian; he shoots Trac instead.

Gleaming the Cube tries very hard to be culturally sensitive, but still enmeshes itself in cliches. Brian is sloppy and rebellious, Vinh is neat, respectful, carries around a portable computer, and fixes Brian's homework so he'll pass math. Some of the American characters try to be anti-racist. When the motel manager where Vinh's body is found says, "They all look alike," the police detective snaps, "No they don't." And there are some nicely done details—one of the Vietnamese characters plays Vietnamese rock and roll on his car stereo. At least there are no Japanese swords or Bonsai in this movie. The problem with the movie is that it is two movies uneasily coexisting; it is a serious cultural-conflict film and a dumb skateboard movie (Brian does skating tricks whenever he's unhappy).

The movie also brings up U.S.-Viet Nam politics, only to ignore them. Col. Trac is killed, and nothing more is ever said about his counterrevolutionary insurgent activities. But it does, at least, portray Vietnamese characters as equal human beings, rather than mannequins, and, at the end, Brian and Colonel Trac's daughter agree to return to school together, forging an alliance that the older generation doesn't seem capable of making.

So, despite the mixed nature of all these films as far as their portrayal of Vietnamese is concerned, at bottom, all of them rely on standard stereotypes of Asians as too hard-working, too industrious, too successful at capitalism, to the point where, in the worst of the Vietnamese mafia movies, they become inscrutable, fearsome criminals. Thus, when American movies finally turn from overt portrayals of the war, to portrayals of the newest population of immigrants, they prove not to leave the war behind at all, but to bring it onto home ground.

"Bearing arms legitimately": *The Walking Dead* and *Panther*

Cynthia Fuchs, Film Studies Program, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 22030.

Previous films about the Vietnam experience have portrayed black servicemen as either cowards, buffoons or background characters. This film is different, not only from other war movies, but also from other films about African American men. *The Walking Dead* portrays black men bearing arms legitimately—not because they are in a gang, but because they are in the biggest gang of all—the United States Military.

This deconstructive comparison of "gangs" by *The Walking Dead*'s writer-director Preston A. Whitmore II, offers a subtle rhetorical paradox which is both instructive and provocative. The question of legitimacy—how it is assigned and by whom, how it shapes notions of honor, loyalty, and betrayal, and specifically, how it is shaped by race and racism in the United States—is at the center of Whitmore's film, which tracks the increasingly horrific experiences of a mostly black Marine unit in South Vietnam in 1972. The question also informs *Panther*, written by Melvin Van Peebles and directed by Mario Van Peebles (both also produced the film, with Preston Holmes), a fictionalized account of the birth of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, 1968-1969.

Until recently, the most readily available representations of the U.S. war in Vietnam and its effects on veterans have been overwhelmingly white. (Movies such as Haile Gerima's *Ashes and Embers* [1982] and John Erman's *Green Eyes* [1976] depict black veterans in complex and compelling ways, but they're not exactly "mainstream.") Now, black male vets are showing up in mass cultural venues, from *Boyz 'N the Hood* (1991), with Laurence Fishburne as a veteran; to *Jason's Lyric* (1994), with Forest Whitaker as the father of two sons, troubled by flashbacks to the point that he abuses his wife and eventually kills himself; to an episode of Fox TV's *The X-Files* (1994), focused on Preacher (Tony Todd), a member of a Special Forces squad subjected to U.S. military "sleep eradication" experiments from 1968 to 1971, now seeking vengeance on the program's perpetrators. The episode represents these particular vets as simultaneously responsible and victimized: when one of the white squad members asks Preacher, "We're all going to hell, right?", he responds, "Where do you think we've been for the last 24 years?"

The Walking Dead works to recover a lost chunk of Vietnam war history. It opens with a sequence of still photos of black soldiers in country, with each other, with Vietnamese civilians, with white soldiers, suggesting at once its factual basis and its recovery project. Unfortunately, the film then slides into an unimaginative rehearsal of well-known war movie conventions, including assaults by anonymous Vietnamese soldiers. The squad, led by tough-but-good-hearted Sergeant Barkley (Joe Morton), is assigned to rescue some U.S. POWs. Approaching a hot LZ, their chopper is shot down and their

rookie white lieutenant is killed (sound familiar?). By the time Barkley eventually figures out that they have been set up as expendable decoys, it's a revelation that seems a little too obvious to be climactic. This is too bad, because there's also an important point here, that such less-than-admitted policy was disproportionately common when it came to black (and other minority) troops. (In fact, with the infamous "Project 100,000," the U.S. government blatantly systematized exactly this kind of policy.)

After their helicopter goes down, the five survivors decide to press on to the POW camp, in hopes that they can salvage the mission. While it soon becomes clear that none of them feel any loyalty to the military or its stated objective, this narrative device lets them tramp through the jungle and explore each other's psyches. That is, each of the central characters is allotted an extended flashback to explain how he came to be in the military, and all flashbacks are accompanied by Motown songs. So, PFC Evans (Allen Payne) thinks back to when he and his new wife are looking to rent an apartment in LA, but gets the "We don't have anything for people like you" treatment from a white rental agent. Evans enlists as an infantry mechanic so his wife can live in base housing.

Private Hoover Branche (Eddie Griffin), on the other hand (or is it the same hand?), tells the story of his life as a street hustler back in Detroit, who tries to impress his girl by stealing a steak from the meatpacking company where he works. He's caught by his employer, and apparently offered the choice of jail or the military (to the tune of "The Tracks of My Tears"). PFC Brooks (Vonte Sweet) joins up to prove his manhood to his young girlfriend, who has dumped him for another guy ("I Heard It Through the Grapevine"). And, as it turns out, Barkley (a former reverend) has a special tragedy as his impetus, hinted at but not revealed until late in the film. His secret past has to do a double murder he commits when he catches his wife with another man. Clearly, the pattern here is pretty tedious (the men have to "take care of" [in whichever sense] or move their women), and it's especially troubling that it tends to deflect the impact of (imposed, institutional, and internalized) racism onto all those unappreciative or disrespectful women.

One of the film's more intriguing turns comes in the squad's token white guy, Corporal Pippin (Roger Floyd), who is also the token psycho. His flashback shows him doing hyper-stylish mobster stuff, as well as coming on to a black woman, which, I guess, is enough to suggest that even "before Vietnam," he's well on his way to transgressing a few borders, legal and social. Ostensibly, the chopper crash sends Pippin over the edge into a Dolph Lundgren-ish lunacy (he tries to kill his fellow squad members and reveals that he has an ear necklace, always the sign of lost-soul-ness), so they tie him up and put him under guard during their trek to the POW camp. Still, Barkley defends him as his friend and a "good man" throughout. And in the end, Barkley's the one who has to kill him, with a bullet to the head. Now this is a rather remarkable image, as it comes upon the Sergeant's realization that the squad has been duped by the military command structure. In this way, the murder is represented as a kind of terrible, heart-rending, but also politically resonant revenge, one which is unique in Vietnam war movies. (The black guy does the right thing by killing the white guy.) It's unfortunate, however, that this is the single moment where the film makes a viscerally affecting ideological charge, indicting the system which has produced this interracial impasse. (Granted, here the point is made overtly—not to say heavy-handedly— symbolic.) Despite its problems, *The Walking Dead* marks a significant representational moment, in that it is a studio-supported film that makes connections between the experiences of black GIs in Vietnam and in the States (and doesn't resort to action movie heroics).

That the film didn't make money suggests that more movies on the topic will be hard to make and distribute. This "bottom line" problem may be less acute for *Panther*, which is more skillfully "dramatic" and "entertaining." Still, its reclamation of "history" is even more complicated, because the central characters are historical figures. *Panther* is upfront about two important points: the connections between the Black Panthers and the Vietnam war, and its own status as *fictional* history. This last point is worth emphasizing, because the film, like Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* or Alan Parker's *Mississippi Burning*, will probably be charged with being inaccurate *as* history. (It's also worth noting a difference between these films: *Malcolm X* works to disclose and market some lesser known Civil Rights "history," and *Mississippi Burning* makes a more familiar, rather notorious move, redrawing a specific chapter of Civil Rights "history" to heroicize the white guy FBI agents played by Willem Dafoe and Gene Hackman, with black characters as background. Parker remarked at the time in a *New York Times* interview, he felt that he couldn't make a movie focused on black characters because "American" audiences wouldn't want to see it...) *Panther* is based on Melvin Van Peebles' novel about the Oakland Panthers, which uses historical speeches, people, and events, interwoven with fictions, to make some basic observations about media and history.

Panther works overtime to redress standard revisionist "history," placing black "heroes" at its dramatized center. It opens with a compelling scene: peacefully protesting the lack of a streetlight on a dangerous corner after a young boy is killed by a car, a group of African Americans are stopped by a group of cops with nightsticks: the visual rhythms are fast, the personal and political stakes are clearly drawn. When some of the young men fight back, they're thrown in jail but once there, they discuss their situation and come to a new way of thinking about survival and resistance. The Panthers "began with two words," the voice-over tells us, "Defend yourselves."

The movie is framed and narrated by a composite character significantly named Judge (Kadeem Hardison); he's a Vietnam vet (based loosely on Geronimo Pratt and other veteran-Panthers), with demolitions expertise, so he's soon deemed useful by the Panther founders, Huey Newton (Marcus Chong) and Bobby Seale (Courtney B. Vance), as well as by the authorities looking for inside informants to support their counterinsurgency program (the infamous but under-reported COINTELPRO). (*Pan-*

ther does reduce the white feds [including James Russo as a snarly field agent] to law-and-order stereotypes: J. Edgar Hoover [Richard Dysart] is shown barking orders to his underlings, as he becomes more and more manic in his pursuit of the young African Americans his office calls "Public Enemy Number One." Brief cutaways to reaction shots of a boxer dog—which looks more like Hoover than Dysart does, panting and bug-eyed—underline the excessiveness of his ranting. This caricature, in particular, seems more than appropriate.)

As his situation becomes more complicated, Judge has "flashbacks" featuring requisite helicopter noise and jungle chaos, images that are thematically linked to his current sense of dread and entrapment, as the feds put pressure on him by threatening his mother's and his friends' lives; and some of the Panthers begin to distrust him (most prominently, Tyrone, played by the always-electric Bokeem Woodbine). At one point, Judge meets with a local detective, Brimmer (a well-cast Joe Don Baker, of *Walking Tall* fame), who claims they share a past and sense of loyalty, because he's a Korean war veteran who believes that the system is designed to help all people get ahead. The movie, meanwhile underlines the ways that such ideals remain impossible for most people, drawing connections between the Vietnam war and the domestic police state, through footage of speeches by Huey Newton, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and even John Kennedy. (Mario Van Peebles appears briefly as Stokely Carmichael, who makes a famous speech declaring Newton a prisoner of war, citing the U.S. history of state-engineered terrorism and genocide.)

Newton and Seale serve as the film's political focus (Chong and Vance are both superb), as they organize meetings, programs (like the breakfasts for neighborhood kids and the "10 points"), and demonstrations. At the same time, the movie shows that the Party was founded on an ideal of multiple "leaders," including women (though these are rather cursorily reduced to a single composite character named Alma, played by rap artist Nefertiti). When Newton is arrested, the Party begins to solidify its political platform, specifying how the U.S. government's treatment of minority citizens paralleled its treatment of the Vietnamese and other "Third World" populations. This worries the FBI, of course, so they enlist black agents as counter-measures, and join forces with a drug trafficker (Michael Wincott)—they meet on a boat with a U.S. flag behind them—to introduce heroin into black neighborhoods. However any of this may be documented or erased from "history," the results are now clear enough.

Granted, it's a lot of practical and ideological ground to cover, and for the most part the movie sustains its momentum. The pivotal dilemma faced by Judge might be understood as representing the eventual downfall of the Panthers (which is not part of this movie's trajectory, but is certainly set up). *Panther* suggests that as they worked so hard to extend the popular definition of legitimacy—by claiming the right to bear arms, to demonstrate, to congregate, to publish a free press, to claim civil rights—the Party faced a much larger, much meaner machine than they might have anticipated. It's an important past to recover, and I kept wishing that the film was more explicit, more incisive about the ways that "legitimate" history is written and disseminated. Mostly it goes the cheerleading route, which replaces one story with another, rather than fully exploring the troubling process of story-making.

Break it down. The revision of "white history" provided by *Panther* is surely no more extreme than that of the 1995 official Cannes selection, *Jefferson in Paris* (an alarmingly—because apparently unconsciously—racist film). Showing Thomas Jefferson's (possible) sexual relationship with his slave Sally Heming as "friendly" is at least as disturbing—and less likely—than showing that Hoover was a lunatic or that the FBI was moving drugs. And *Panther*'s revision of "black history" is part of a larger, increasingly visible culturalmovement, one which multiplies and diversifies perspectives once limited to the so-called "dominant." As it recuperates and reimagines those stories long repressed by mainstream imagery, the film, while occasionally reductive, offers a spirited response to other historical fictions.

Interview with Mario Van Peebles

Cynthia Fuchs, Film Studies Program, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 22030.

When I met Mario Van Peebles, he was wearing a black on black "Panther" tee-shirt. Since it was unusually warm, we talked outside, in one of the Four Season Hotel's extremely posh terrace areas. We were served orange juice and mineral water. Van Peebles took off his sneakers and socks, leaned back and breathed deeply. Very cool guy, doing that promotional thing (which means a lot of repetition in interviews) and feeling okay and energetic about it.

CF: I was happy to see *Panther* because so many people I've met have no notion of the Panthers except for what they've heard through popular culture, that they were scary black guys with guns. How are you thinking about the audience for the film?

MVP: Well, to some extent, like many kids, I was exposed to what the media told us, and we heard a lot about the militancy, but not about the breakfast programs, or the sickle cell anemia programs, or the Panthers teaming up with the Peace and Freedom Movement, SNCC, or the Brown Berets, to run a black candidate for president and a white one for vice- president on the same ticket.

I thought it was interesting that Malcolm, when he was echoing the "blue-eyed devil" Muslim doctrine, did more to swell the ranks of the KKK than to threaten the status quo. Then when he went to Mecca and came back and said, you know, I've prayed next to Muslims of all colors, and I believe now it has more to do with where your heart is than what your skin color is, that he became a real threat to the establishment. And that's when they take you out. So when the Panthers could be played up as anti-white, they weren't as much of a threat, but when they started teaming up with the radical white kids who were due to inherit all this, and were sort of tuning in, turning on, and dropping out, and burning their draft cards, and Mario Savio, and those folks who were sort of for the first time criticizing the system that they were supposed to run, Hoover said they were "Public Enemy Number One" and attorney John Mitchell said they'd be wiped out by the end of 1969. So, the threat is really when you think when you think nationally and go beyond racial lines, and start having a real platform that they get real excited.

And then that's coupled with the very interesting rise of hard drugs in specific communities and the examination of that, and the minute you say, well I don't see any poppy fields in Harlem, in Compton, in DC, in the South Side of Chicago, and I don't see any gun- manufacturing plants. The minute you say, how do all these narcotics and weapons get here, and you just follow the money, follow the food chain, you get some very interesting answers. So for all those reasons. Plus, I had this radical dad who kept going on about how he knew a lot of these guys, and they had made his movie required viewing. I started to do research on all that and the old man wasn't lying. And I found one of the old Panther papers from 1971— I have it right here [pulls it out of his case]—the cover shows *Sweetback*, and the inside story has an introduction by Bobby Seale, about [my father's] picture. And then they talk about this kid in the movie, and the kid is me. Talk about being amazed at what you find in some old archive. This is really intense. So personally, it was something that I really wanted to do.

The Panthers changed things. Look at the names that were used to describe the people. "Colored" is a way of saying, just a little different from white, but colored. And so when we were "colored," the subliminal message was, be more Ghandi-esque, be cleaner, be nobler, be a little more godlike than your enemy and he will have to notice your humanity and give in to his humanity and you'll win. So the Poitier movies, the sort of "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" character, were about being really neat, you know, "colored." The subliminal thing was, forgive them for they know not what they do. The Panthers said fuck that, power concedes nothing without demand, after 400 years of practice they know exactly what they're doing. Their subliminal message was different; it was like, hey, we're tired of getting hosed off of here for praying or beat up by dogs over there for sitting at the wrong lunch counter. We have a right, a constitutional right to bear arms, we're gonna bear some arms. If the cops bother us, we're gonna patrol the cops. So their whole thing was radically different. But the more things change, the more they stay the same. While we're busy focusing on OJ and all that, all these civil rights gains are being repealed. And the very same social conditions that brought these parties, SNCC, the SDS, and the Panthers, into existence, are coming back again.

I think these guys will play golf while Rome burns. That's unfortunate, do you know what I mean? They really don't get it. And when I say that, I get asked, does that mean there'll be another group like the Panthers? And I say to that, we'd be lucky if that were the case, but I don't think that is the case. Because if you study your history, if you look at '68, when America, not just the black community, finally realized that whether you were JFK, or you were Malcolm and said "By any means necessary," or you were Martin and said by peaceful means, they'd kill you anyway. They'd name a holiday after a couple guys, but they'd kill you. In '68, when folks were uprising, one place it didn't have one was Oakland, because Oakland was Panther Party headquarters and the Panthers said that's not a revolution, that's a riot, and they kept people cool. So what the establishment doesn't realize is that they'd be lucky to have a venue to let some steam out of this pot. I don't know that we're that coordinated anymore. I think we're much more fragmented. I think that COINTELPRO was too successful. I don't know that people will have the sense to say, well what does this mean? I think it will be a long hot summer, unfortunately. It's a strange time to make a movie like this. I'm asked why don't I make *Tommy Boy* and *Dumb and Dumber*, what am I doing, and talking scale and doing pictures like this? I think we're at a critical time, and I think we're gonna wake up a little while from now and go, wow, how did that happen again?

CF: I'm wondering about two things, your relationship with Gramercy [Pictures], and plans marketing for the film.

MVP: I don't think that Gramercy had any idea what they were getting. And if they did, I'm not sure they would have made this film, in all honesty. I think that they're struggling with it and they mean well. The good news is this, working with Gramercy, working with PolyGram, they seem to take a gamble with people, and they let my father and I have final cut. So the movie really is, for better or for worse, the movie that we wanted to make. We had economic constraints but not political constraints. So I have to definitely give some props to that, because no studio would do that. But they don't have the money of a Warner Brothers, they can't get it out on the level like a *Malcolm* or a *JFK*. So if a film like this gets seen, it's probably gonna be more word of mouth.

[Reviewer] Gary Franklin saw five minutes of the movie, thought that it would make people go nuts, ran out and did a very negative review, and when they put the clips on, they took the music out. Because he thought that it was too ennobling. So we're dealing with some people who are scared of that. They'd rather see you in the hood, shooting each other.

CF: Actually, this movie seems like the background to *New Jack City*, showing where the drugs and guns come from.

MVP: Exactly. It was the prequel. Look at Earl Anthony's *Spitting in the Wind*: he's a Panther who was an FBI informant, and he talks about how he was specifically given drugs by the FBI guys to distribute. You know, Noriega was a trafficker, but when he was arrested—we were all focusing, I think, on Michael Jackson—for whatever he did that pissed them off, they wouldn't let him testify...For a lot of folks [the federal drug connections are] an absolutely new theory, it seems just weird and outlandish. In terms of marketing and distribution, every time I talk to them it's less theaters. One bus company called and said, well, we don't know if we can run the ad.

CF: But making it was okay?

MVP: Well, when we set out to make it, we ran into the usual do-it-from-the-mainstream perspective, and we were told that if we could create a sort of Mario Savio character—who we could get a Tom Cruise or a Brad Pitt to play—who meets these young black guys and gives them some books and gets them to think and stand up for themselves, and they could be the Panthers and he could be their coach, then we could do the film. And we were like [mouth-open expression]. And then they suggested creating a white Panther, who could be like this leader, and we said, well, that wouldn't really work. And they pointed out, look, do you think mainstream America would care about Native American rights without Costner in the middle? We know the Civil Rights Movement was led by King and Stokely, but Hollywood makes *Mississippi Burning* with two nice FBI guys? I mean, that's like nice Nazis, man.

CF: You know, the movie's going to catch shit for redressing that imbalance, which I think is a good thing. But I've already seen a review of *Panther*, and its take on it was that all the white feds are one dimensional villains.

MVP: Well, that's not really the case. Joe Don Baker is a positive character and the black FBI guy is a negative character. But if you're a member of the dominant culture, unless you're hip or you look at things with a different perspective, you're used to seeing yourself represented in a dominant form, in a majority. So white folks love the black guy in *Gump* [he does an imitation of him saying, "Shrimp boat, shrimp dog, shrimp cat," with lower lip stuck way out]. Now, if it was an all black movie and the white boy was doing that, they'd have a double fit, but they love him in *Gump*. But we're used to having a sense of humor, 'cause we're used to being stuck in those roles, we've been Steppin Fetchit, we've been Eddie Murphy, we're the funny ones. The dominant culture's not used to that. They would see it a certain way, but I don't think that's really the tone of the movie, or the tone of the Movement, at all. That's a very small look at the world. I mean, I loved *My Life as a Dog*, and I didn't see anyone black in the movie. I can't watch a movie and think about my color. Then I can't go anywhere. That's too narrow. I'm often amazed when white folks think that way. 'Cause we all grew up watching Superman and thinking that could be us. I mean, little kids watch Shaq and Mike and they think that's them slam-dunking, and that's the beauty of it. I don't know what age it is that you go, hmmm, he's not my color, therefore I can't identify with his humanity. Or her humanity. I watched *Aliens* and I thought it was absolutely revolutionary that they had Sigourney Weaver and she didn't have to do a speech about her ovaries. She just kicked ass. And to see those men in the audience all enthusiastic; [that movie] was subliminally very hip.

CF: What about the women in your movie? How did you decide to make the composite character [Alma], instead of being specific?

MVP: Well, we were doing the early years of the Party, so it ends around 69, before Elaine Brown joins the Party, before any big female leaders. Kathleen Cleaver was in [the movie].

CF: I saw [I make a short-distance sign with my thumb and finger].

MVP: Yeah, a little bit. And Angela Davis was affiliated but not a member. There are two things. One, why did we use any composite character? You know the FBI's understanding of the Movement was that if you take off the head, you kill the body. So if you put a bullet in Malcolm, you somewhat stop the Movement, not just the man, but the Movement. You put a bullet in JFK, same thing, same

thing with Martin. Fred Hampton, who was Chicago chairman, said, "They can jail the revolutionary, they can't jail the revolution; they can put a bullet in a man, they can't put a bullet in the Movement." What did that mean? Well, when Huey was getting the lion's share of the press, suddenly Bobby Seale was leading the Panthers to the capital, while Huey was staying back in Oakland. And Bobby would get the press, and then suddenly Eldridge would come forward, and then David Hillier, and then Elaine Brown later, and other folks later on. When they jailed Huey, over the Fray shooting, there were 75 Panthers. when he got out there were 5000. They could kill Fred Hampton, they could jail Huey, but they couldn't stop the Movement, because what happened was, it had several heads. They delegated responsibility. The problem with making a film about that is, if you just do the Newton story, you don't go to the capital with Bobby. If you just do the Elaine Brown story until way later, until '71, '72, and you're in the LA chapter, so you not where the Party started. So that's one problem with doing this story.

Second problem is, we're in an age when you could not get elected because of your sex life. You could be not head of something if they find out that you're gay, like in the military. It's crazy. People are more focused on people's personal lives than on their ability to get the job done. So there's a real tendency to go after the messenger, to eclipse or invalidate the message. So we felt if we just did the Huey story, then it'd be invalidated by his later drug thing. And if we just did the Elaine Brown story, they'd say, well, that was later, you could say this [what? he didn't say]. If you just did a specific story, you might get in trouble that way.

And a third thing was, when an audience watches, especially when a young audience watches, the Ghandis, the Martins, the Malcolms, they seem somehow messiah-like, bigger and greater than us. When your hero is young, or when your hero is an everyman or an everywoman, they're somehow closer to you. And you're saying subliminally, you don't have to be a Newton or an Angela or an Eldridge or a Martin, to make a difference. The everyman, the rank and file, what Marx called the lumpen proletariat, can make a difference too. So, I was more interested in using a hero that was sort of an everyman, and using....[a plane flies overhead, making much noise: Van Peebles says, "COINTELPRO surveillance!"] I thought that that would be strong, to do it that way.

And there's yet another problem. We didn't want to make a three hour movie. One movie can't be everything, and there's a real tendency when you get a film, to load it up! I wanna see what happened to the pregnant Puerto Rican problem, and where's Angela, and where's so-and-so? Hollywood made [all those] Vietnam movies, and when those films stopped making money, they said Vietnam films aren't making money, they didn't say white films aren't making money. Now we know the danger is, they make *Superfly* and *Shaft* and *Cotton Comes to Harlem* and those films start making money and they may attribute it to the skin color as opposed to the genre of the film. And the door could close, which is why I've been in a hurry to make a couple of films I care about and make sure that they were done correctly.

There's a zillion stories in the Movement, and the women, like in any movement, had a tougher role, but they were, in a big way, the backbone of a lot of what was actually done. Our technical advisor was the first woman to join [L. Tarika Lewis], and she became so proficient in the arms that she became the military advisor, taught the brothers how to use their weapons, it'd blow their minds. That scene [in the movie] where the women join, that was inspired by her experience. One of the things we did as a tribute to their leadership was a song called "Freedom," sung by Nefertiti, Salt-n-Pepa, Queen Latifah, En Vogue, Vanessa Williams, and Me'Shell NdegeOcello, Brownstone and Zane, and TLC, all of them singing this song "Freedom."

CF: Yeah, it's on MTV already.

MVP: Right. Admittedly there were so many parts of the Movement that we just couldn't get into, because this isn't only about the Panthers, it's also about COINTELPRO.

CF: Well, that is the history that gets repressed, that nobody talks about that. Why did you decide to make Judge a vet?

MVP: One, because there are very interesting Panthers like Geronimo Pratt, who were vets, who were fighting a war and came home to understand that a different war was being fought. That was an important point to make. The Panthers drew a lot of inspiration from different people, and they said that the spirit of the people is greater than the Man's technology. Case in point, look at all this heavy armaments used against the Vietnamese, and they survived. So the Panthers believed the greatest resource was the human resource. They said, we don't have any high tech microphones, but we'll take certain loyal Panther members and let them be our eyes and ears into COINTELPRO. And when Judge says, why me? It's because he's the kind of nigger they think they can trust. Part of that is his Vietnam experience, he's already fought for America in a certain way. And it was also interesting to see the relationship between Hardison [who plays Judge] as a vet, and Joe Don Baker [who plays an Oakland detective] as a vet. Because Baker really does believe. He says, "Look, my parents came over here dirt poor and we made it. So you can do it." He's actually a good guy, who believes that the system works, and it's interesting to see how he feels when he understands the bigger picture. So I liked that "soldier" parallel, from different generations and cultures.

CF: I saw that you used the footage of Newton comparing the Vietnam war to the war against minorities in the states. This was also emphasized when you show up [in the movie] making the speech at Alameda about Huey Newton being a prisoner of war.

MVP: That was Stokely's speech, a great speech, making connections across U.S. history, they never declared war on North Korea, they never bothered to declare war on the Indians, they just wiped them out. So when you consider this perspective, you go, hmmm.

CF: And wasn't that [King's] Riverside Church speech [about the war] that was in the background when Judge and his mother are sitting on the steps outside their house?

MVP: Yeah, about Vietnam. You really watch movies, don't you?

CF: Actually, it struck me that inserting archival footage and audio, throughout the fiction-film, framed the fiction to make more connections possible.

MVP: Yeah, the riots in '68 with the Jimi Hendrix cut, you go, oh wow. Where you going with that gun? It's all connected.

CF: Right, and more connections: during the '92 uprising, I forget where I read this, but one of the participants said, this is Vietnam, man.

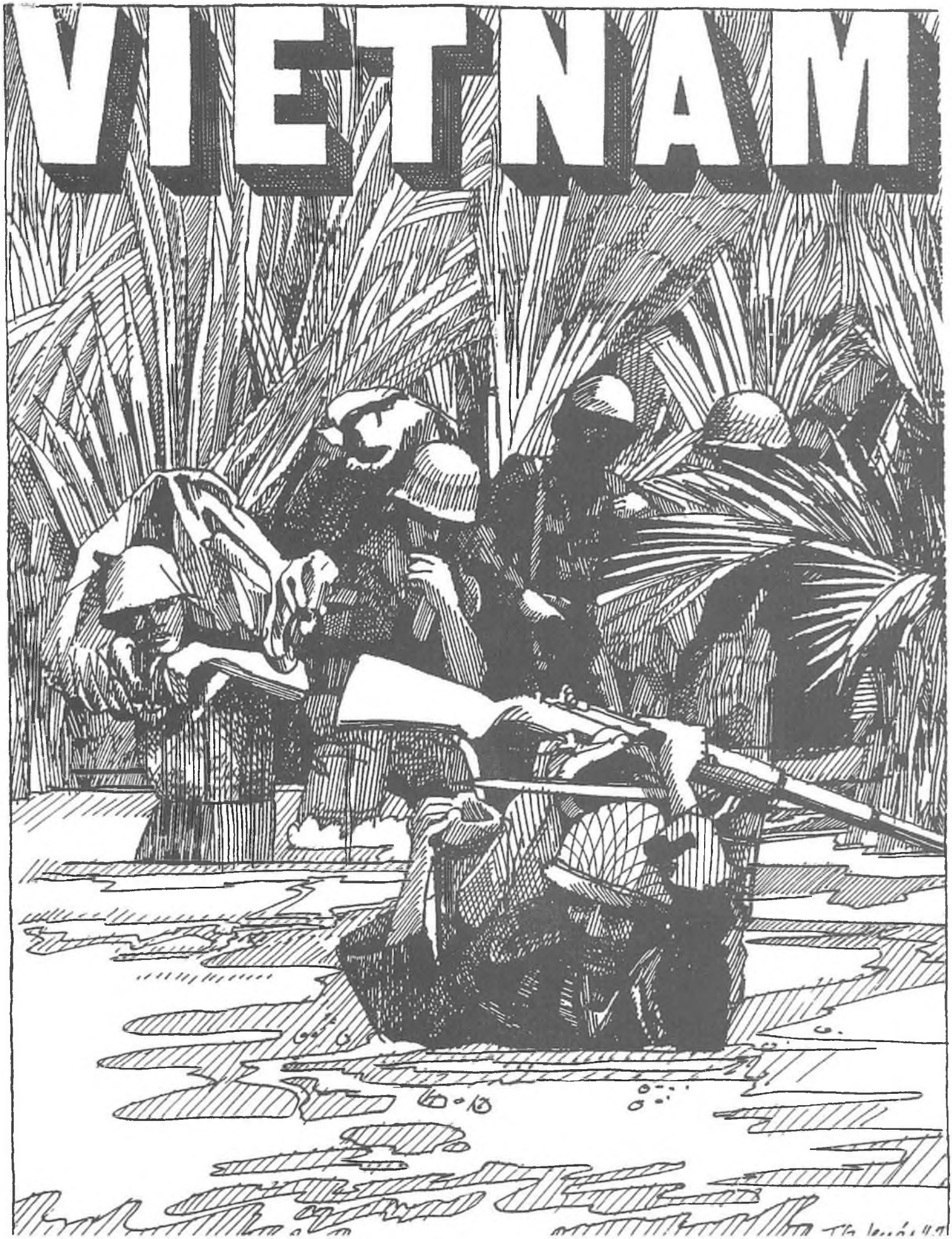
MVP: Yes, and after the uprising, there were the same proposals [by government officials] being made again. How do we get this out here, man? This has to change.

CF: One more question: can you talk about working with your father?

MVP: He's a smart cat, he has a real sense of humor. I had a big advantage in that I grew up with a father who was working with people of all colors, spoke a couple languages, and never thought that meant he was losing his blackness. You study African American film, unfortunately you can see the effects of colonization. Every year you can see a couple of films that show that the more successful you get, the more white you become, the fear of that. It's very interesting, because Africans don't have that fear at all. We have this thing that if you don't all talk like Snoop Dogg, you must be losing your blackness. I don't know if women have that, but we have this whole thing, that if you're not wearing twelve god chains, you're losing your identity. But, like, if you're Margaret Thatcher's daughter, whether you agree with mom's politics or not, it would be very hard for some man later in life to tell you you'd never make it because of your sex. That would be confusing for you. If you're gonna deform a tree, it has to happen early, and if not, it just grows up straight.

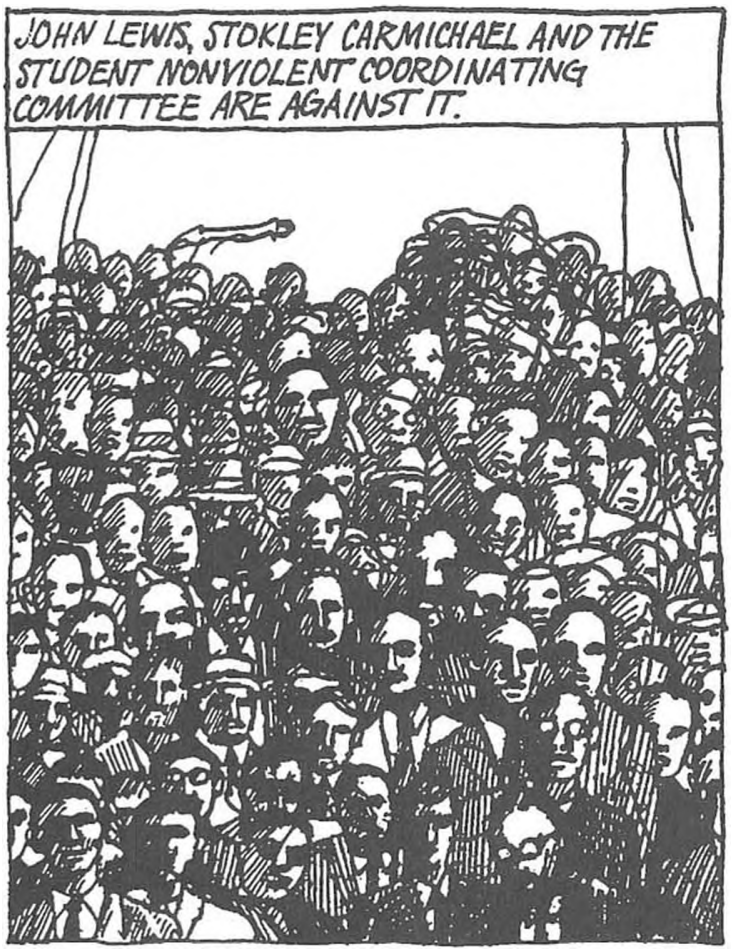
The people who've helped me have been all colors, from Clint [Eastwood] to Steven Cannell, people who were cool. I think one of the greatest advantages about my father is his sense of humor, and he's never defined himself in capitalist terms. In a capitalist society, the laws are made by those with capital to protect their capital, basically to keep those without capital without capital. And you define yourself as being on top when you have a lot of capital. And he's never defined himself that way, i.e., did my film make a lot of money, that kind of thing. If we were like that, I'd be making a very different type of film, you know, *Dumb and Dumber* meets *Tommy Boy*, do you know what I mean?

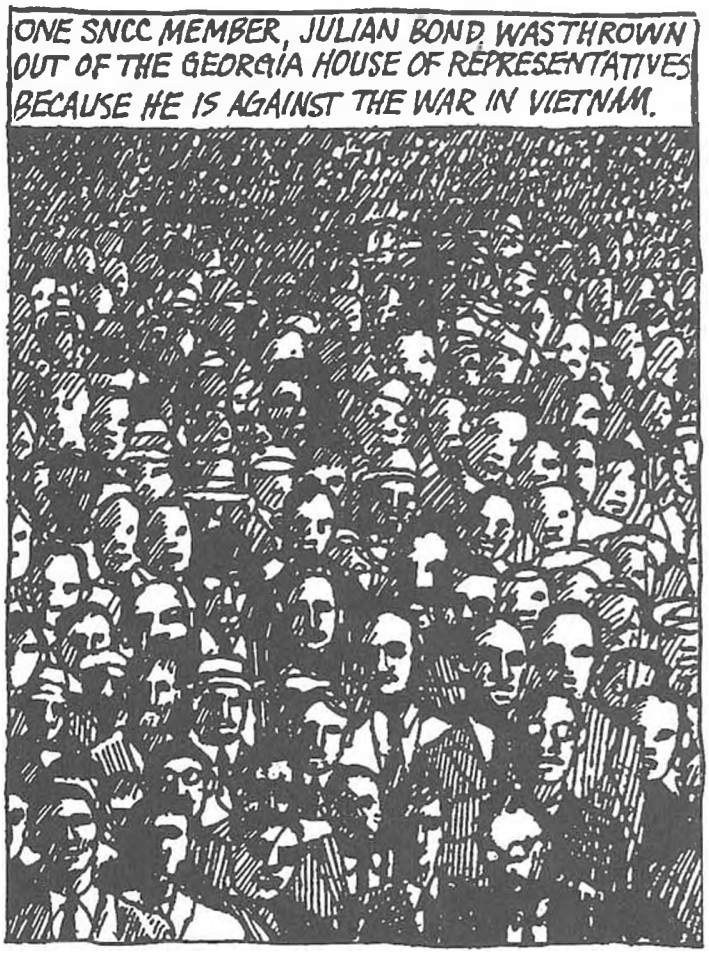
So he's very courageous. And he's a pain in the ass, he's very opinionated. I think that it's healthy for filmmakers to be told no. You know, often, by the third or fourth film, people can get soft, because they have their own empire, and they surround themselves with people who agree with them. So I think it's healthy to get people who say, hey that's a stupid idea. So we can banter and we argue. I think he wrote a pretty good script. And we have a mutual agreement, people like the movie I claim it's the directing and he claims it's the writing; people don't like the movie, I say he screwed it up. The FBI comes after us, I blame him, he blames me. So it's pretty live. I'm a weird guy, I live next door to my mom and I work with my dad. I have very hip parents, they were hitchhiking to Altamont to see the Rolling Stones, my father knew the Panthers, they showed me some beautiful stuff. So it was a cool way to grow up.



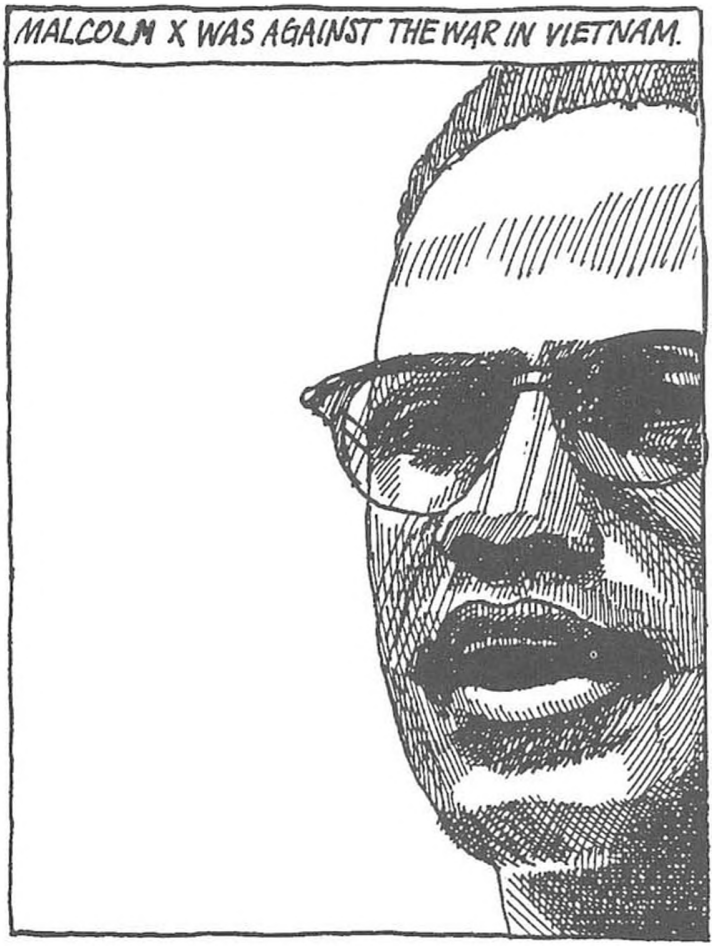
This is a reproduction of the full text and graphics of *Vietnam*, a comic written by Julian Bond and published in 1966 after he was expelled from the Georgia House of Representatives for opposing the war in Viet Nam. It was illustrated by T.G. Lewis. We hope that it will be useful teaching material. We'll be making it available via World Wide Web in the near future.

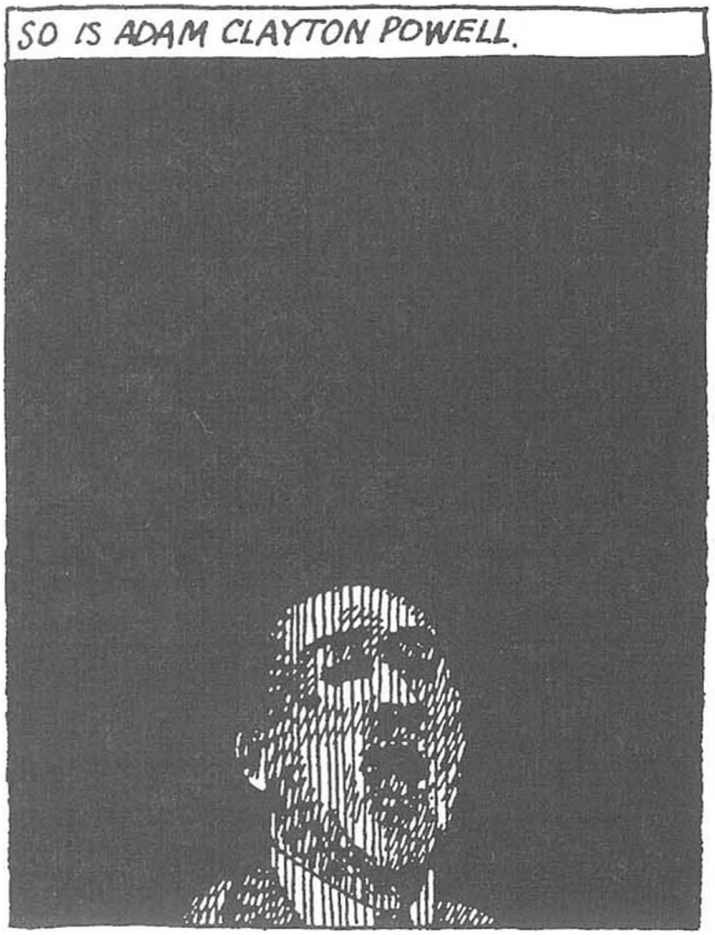

WHO IS AGAINST THE WAR IN VIET NAM?
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
AND THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ARE AGAINST IT.
THE SOUTHERN CONFERENCE EDUCATIONAL FUND AND INTERRACIAL CIVIL RIGHTS GROUP IS AGAINST IT.

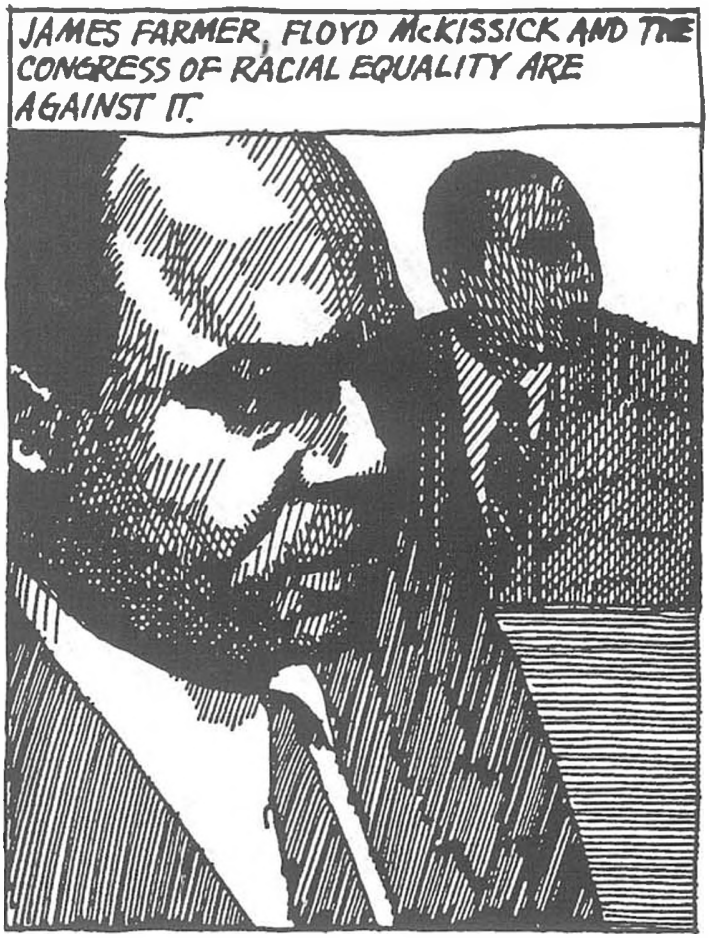

JOHN LEWIS, STOKLEY CARMICHAEL AND THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE ARE AGAINST IT.


ONE SNCC MEMBER, JULIAN BOND, WAS THROWN OUT OF THE GEORGIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BECAUSE HE IS AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM.

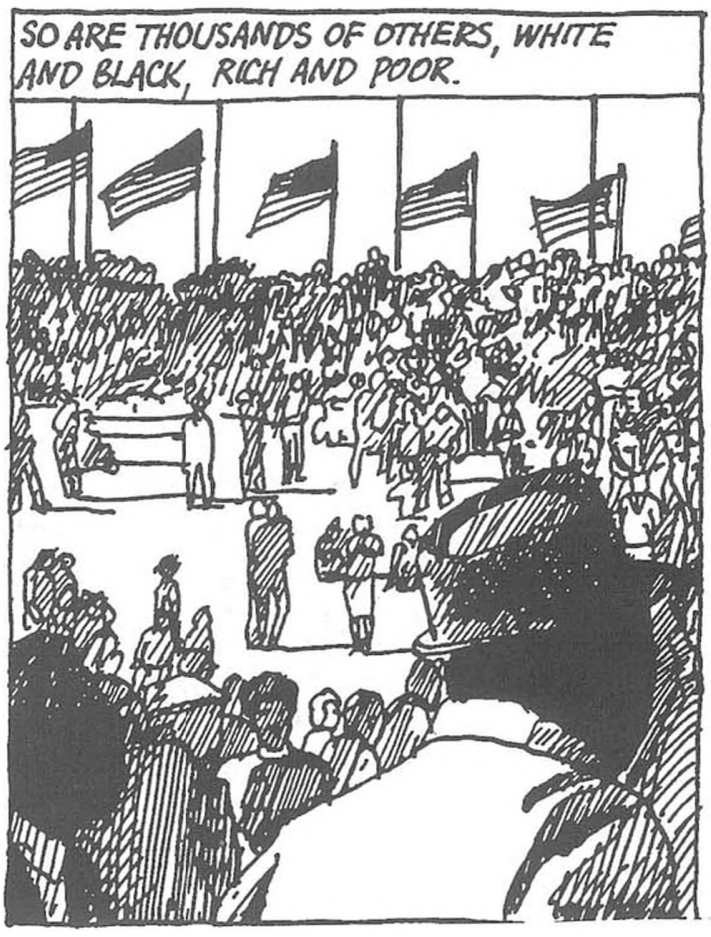

CASSIUS CLAY- MUHAMMED ALI- AND ELIJAH MUHAMMED AND THE BLACK MUSLIMS ARE AGAINST IT.


MALCOLM X WAS AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM.

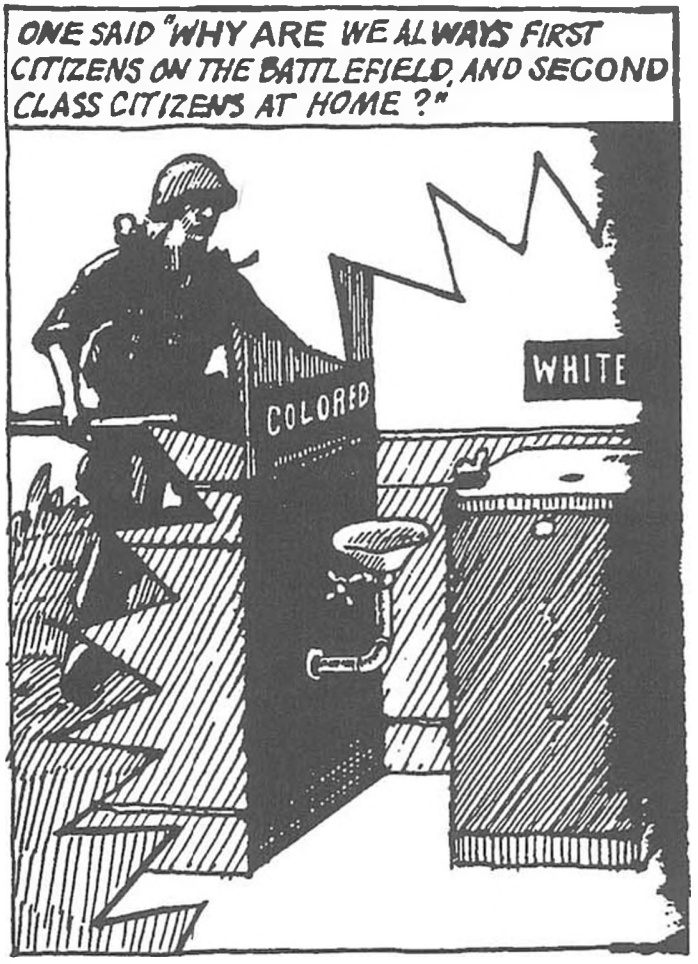

SO IS ADAM CLAYTON POWELL.

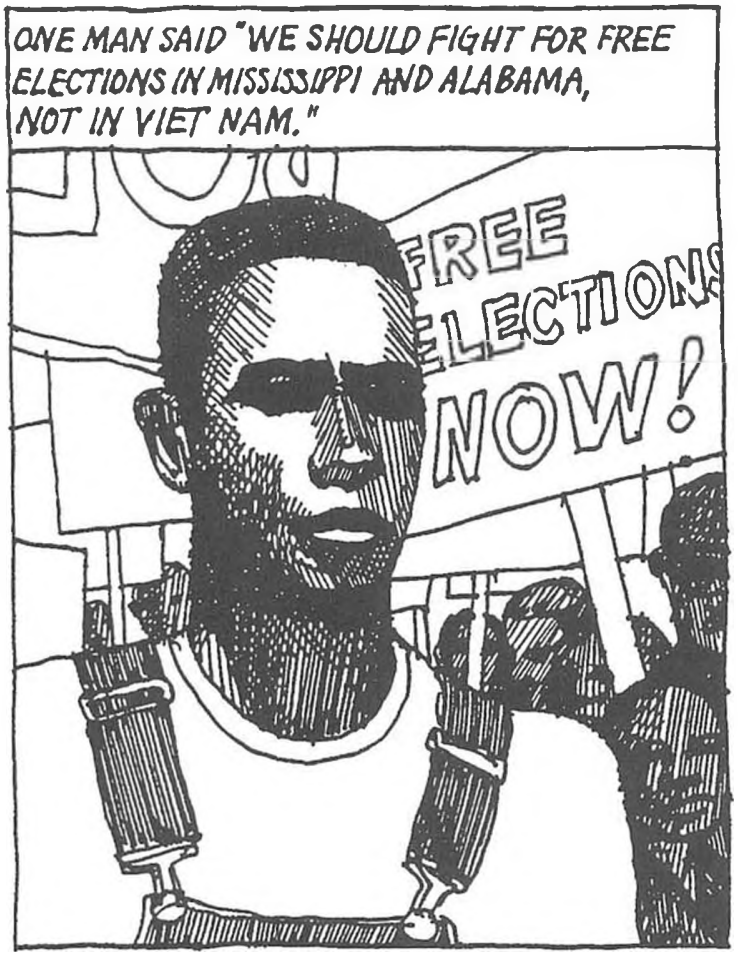

JAMES FARMER, FLOYD McKISSICK AND THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY ARE AGAINST IT.


MOST OF THE AFRICANS AT THE UNITED NATIONS ARE AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM.


SO ARE THOUSANDS OF OTHERS, WHITE AND BLACK, RICH AND POOR.

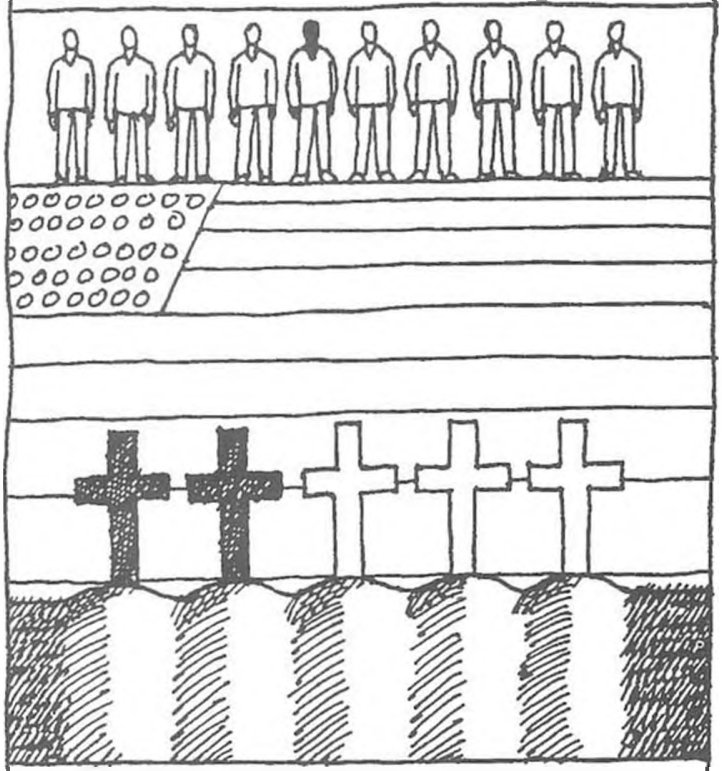

THE NEGRO MAN SAID: "WHY SHOULD WE FIGHT FOR A COUNTRY THAT HAS NEVER FOUGHT FOR US?"


ONE SAID "WHY ARE WE ALWAYS FIRST CITIZENS ON THE BATTLEFIELD AND SECOND CLASS CITIZENS AT HOME?"
COLORED
WHITE


ONE MAN SAID "WE SHOULD FIGHT FOR FREE ELECTIONS IN MISSISSIPPI AND ALABAMA, NOT IN VIET NAM."
FREE
ELECTIONS
NOW!


SOME NEGROES ARE WORRIED BECAUSE SO MANY OF US SUFFER FROM THE WAR.

ONE OUT OF EVERY TEN YOUNG MEN IN AMERICA IS A NEGRO.



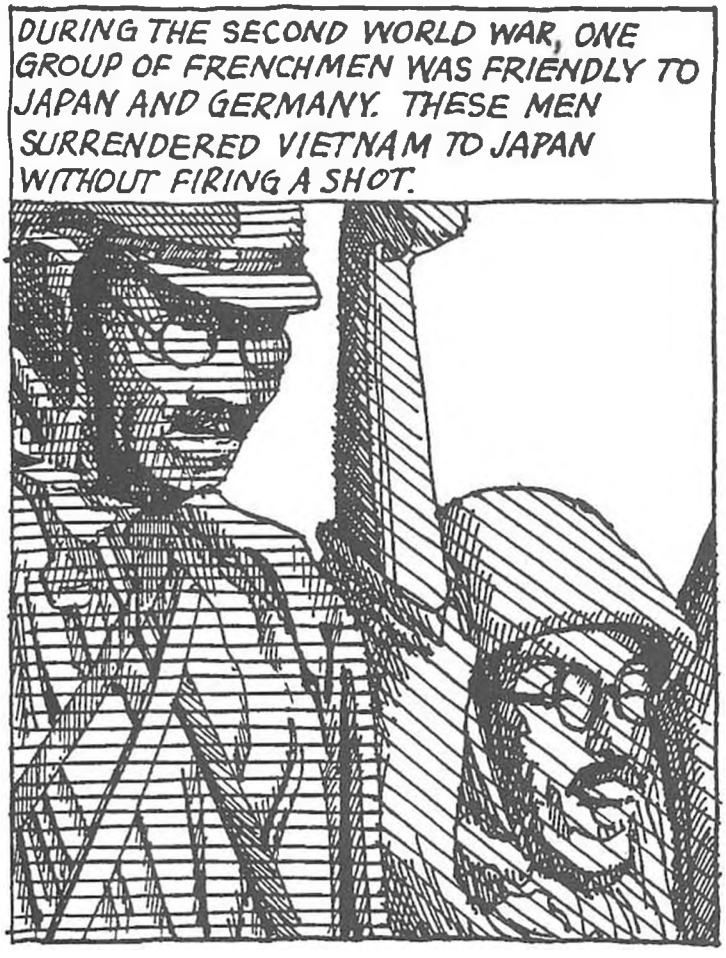
BUT TWO OUT OF EVERY FIVE MEN KILLED IN THE WAR IN VIETNAM IS A NEGRO.

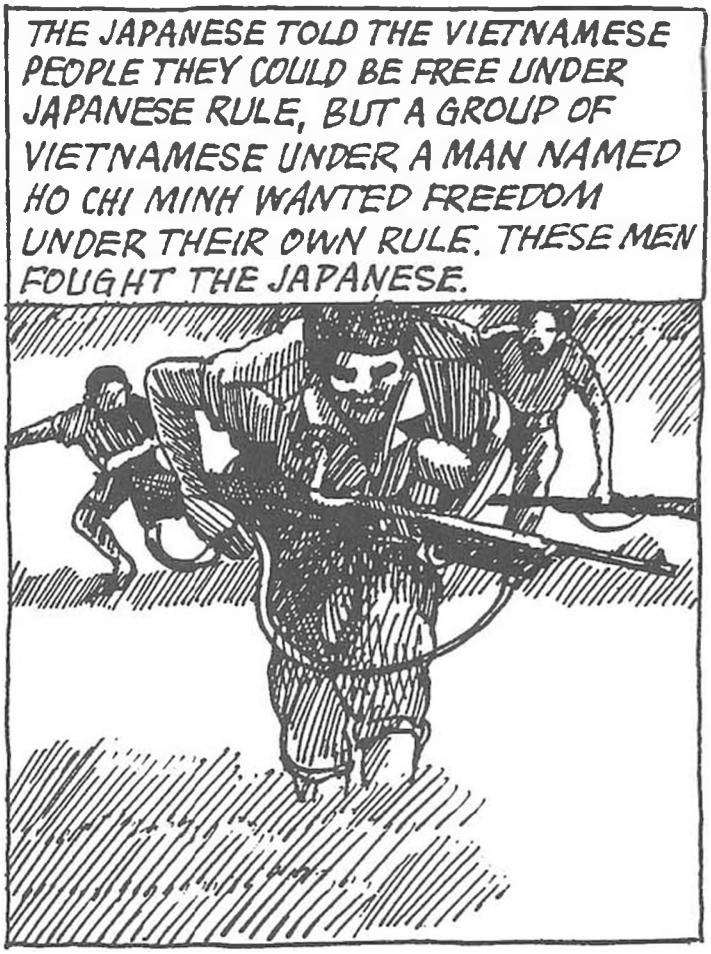
THE UNITED STATES SAYS THIS IS BECAUSE NEGROES ARE VERY BRAVE, BUT MOST PEOPLE KNOW IT IS BECAUSE WE DO MORE OF THE DIRTY FRONT-LINE FIGHTING THAN WE SHOULD.

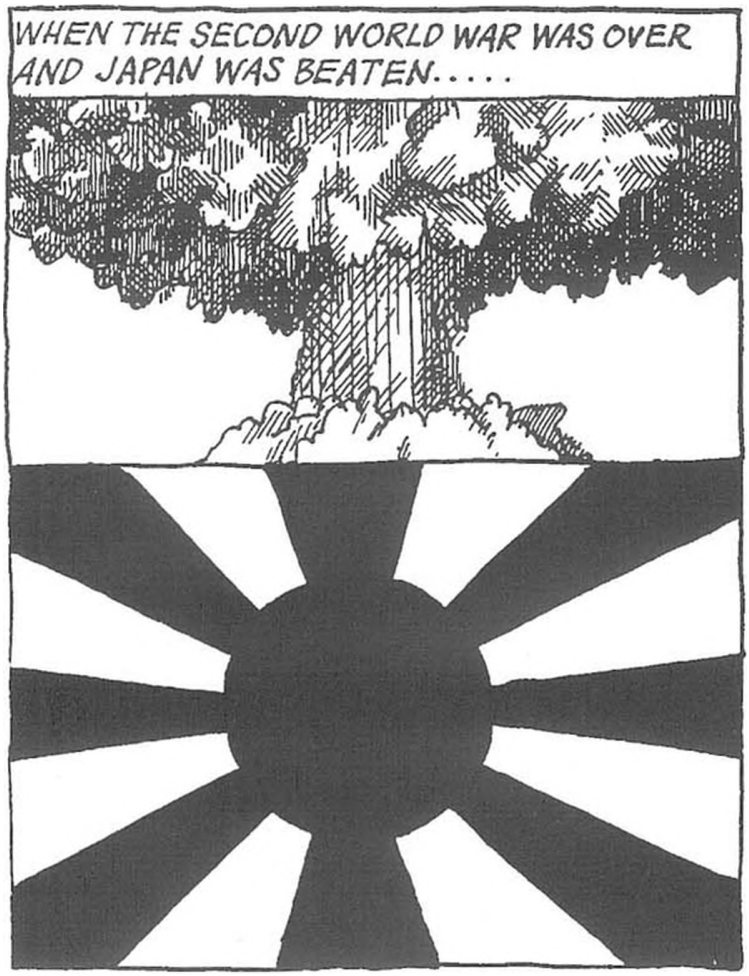
WHEN YOU READ THIS BOOK, HOW WILL YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR SON, OR HUSBAND OR BROTHER OR UNCLE — OR YOURSELF - FIGHTING MILES AWAY FROM HOME AGAINST A PEOPLE WHO ONLY WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE BY EVERYONE?

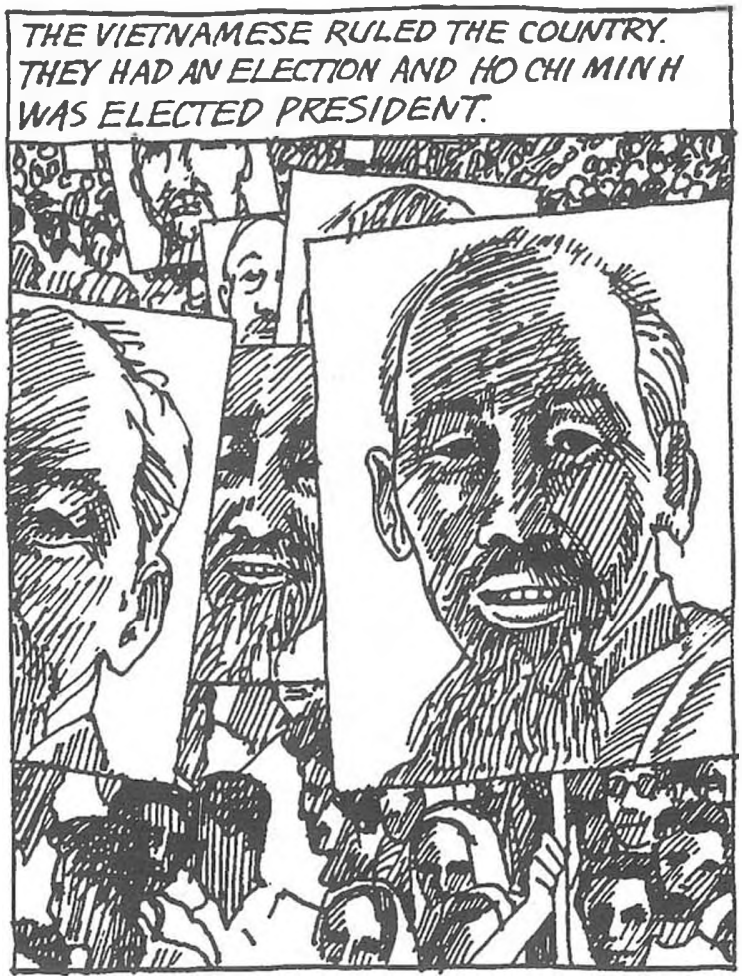

IN 1860, WHEN THE UNITED STATES WAS FIGHTING A WAR TO FREE THE SLAVES,

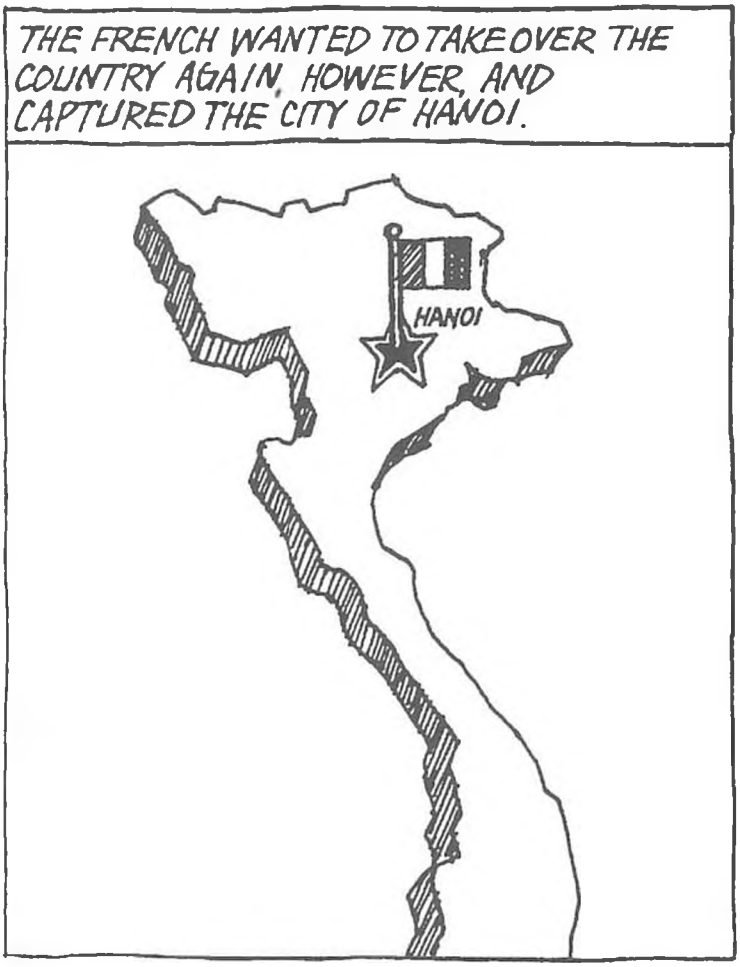

THE FRENCH WERE FIGHTING A WAR TO MAKE SLAVES OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN VIETNAM. THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WANTED TO RUN THEIR OWN COUNTRY, BUT COULD NOT DEFEAT THE STRONG FRENCH ARMIES.

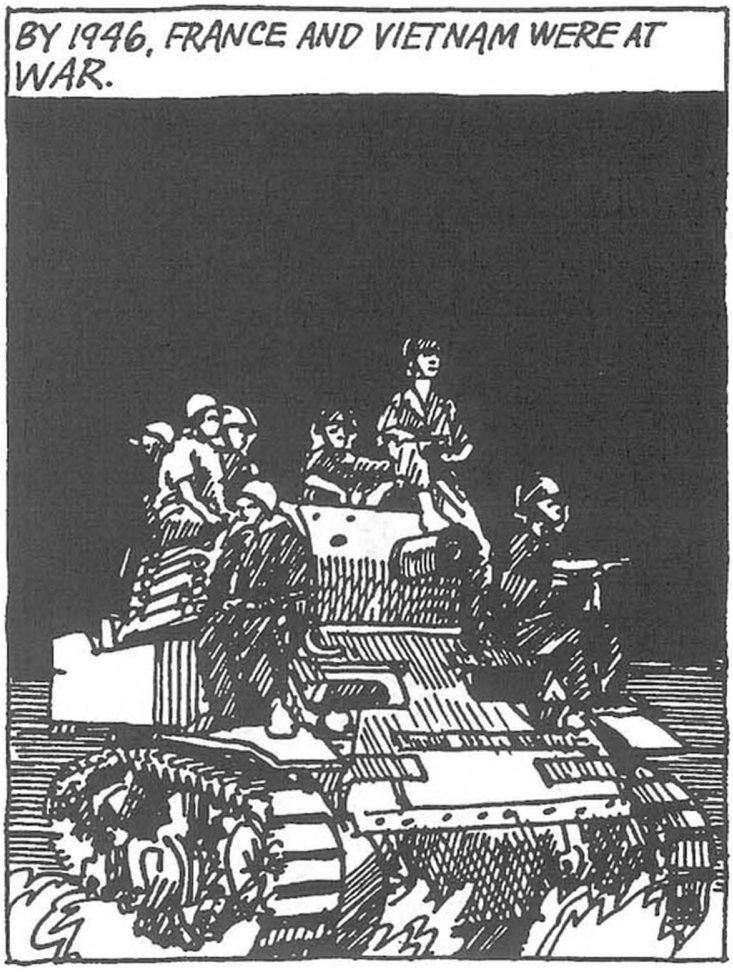

DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, ONE GROUP OF FRENCHMEN WAS FRIENDLY TO JAPAN AND GERMANY. THESE MEN SURRENDERED VIETNAM TO JAPAN WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT.


THE JAPANESE TOLD THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE THEY COULD BE FREE UNDER JAPANESE RULE, BUT A GROUP OF VIETNAMESE UNDER A MAN NAMED HO CHI MINH WANTED FREEDOM UNDER THEIR OWN RULE. THESE MEN FOUGHT THE JAPANESE.

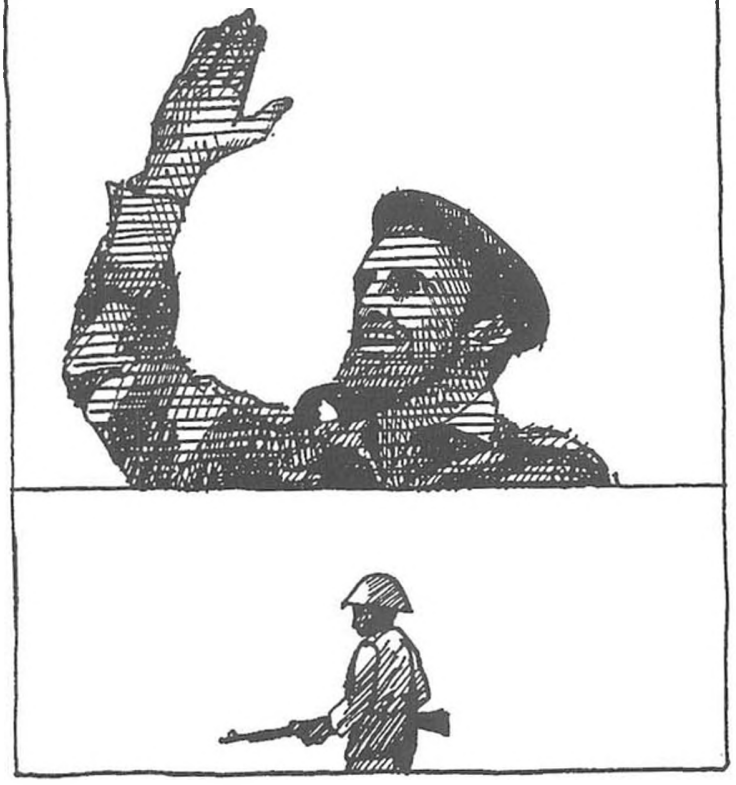

WHEN THE SECOND WORLD WAR WAS OVER AND JAPAN WAS BEATEN.....


THE VIETNAMESE RULED THE COUNTRY. THEY HAD AN ELECTION AND HO CHI MINH WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT.

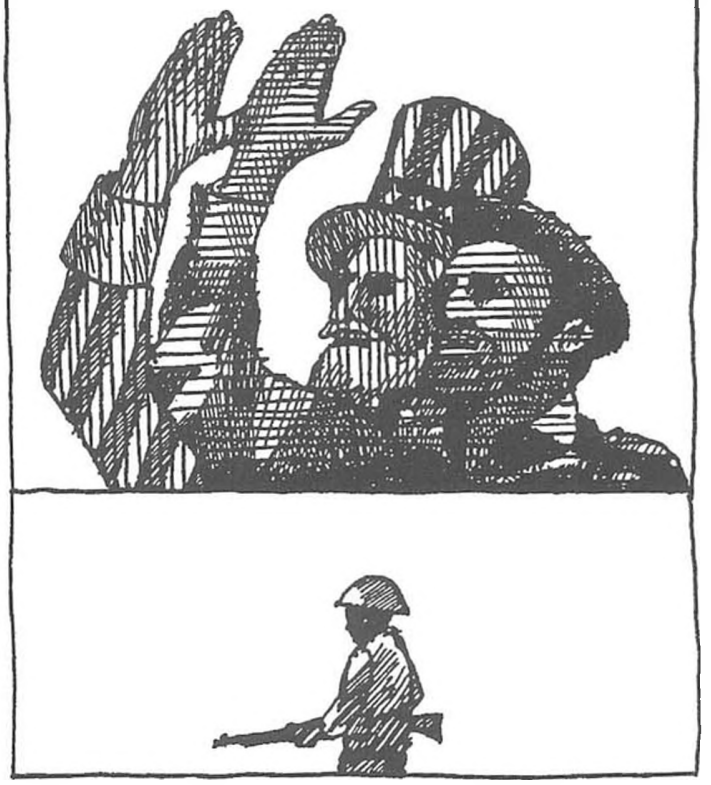

THE FRENCH WANTED TO TAKE OVER THE COUNTRY AGAIN, HOWEVER, AND CAPTURED THE CITY OF HANOI.
HANOI


BY 1946, FRANCE AND VIETNAM WERE AT WAR.

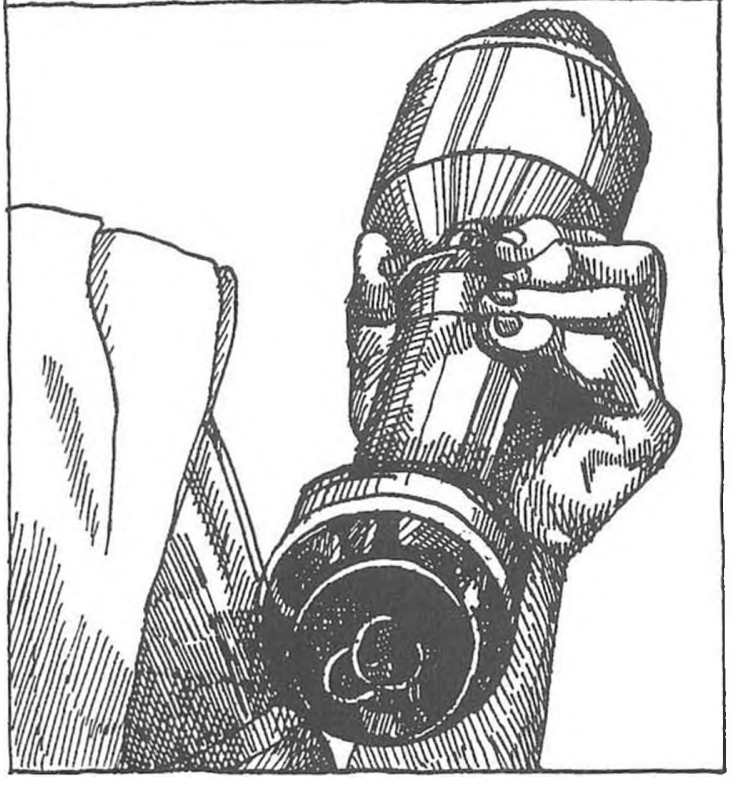
EVEN THOUGH THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WERE FIGHTING FOR INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY AGAINST AN OUTSIDE FORCE,



THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT HELP THEM. INSTEAD, WE HELPED FRANCE.

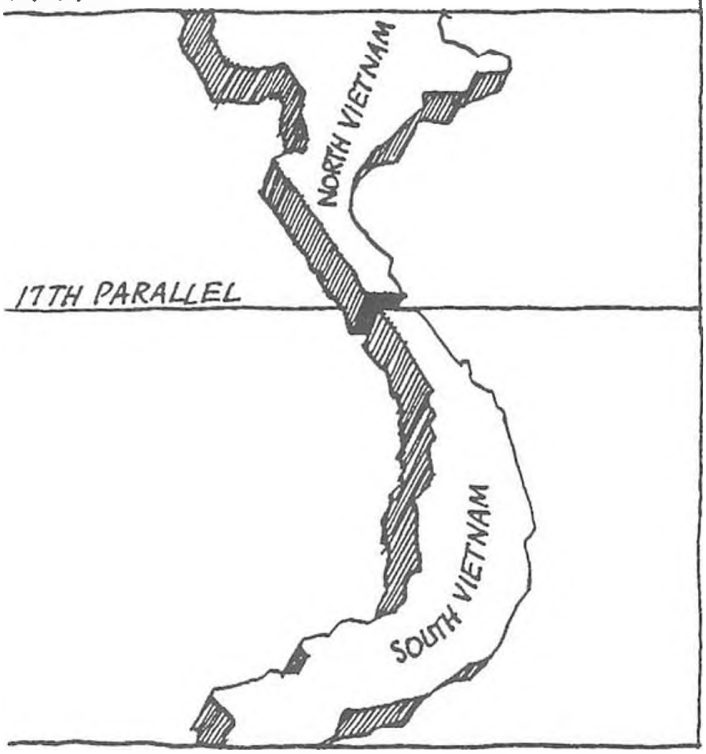


BUT EVEN WITH OUR HELP, WITH MODERN WEAPONS AND MANY MEN, THE FRENCH COULD NOT WIN. SOME MEN WANTED US TO TAKE OVER THE WAR WHEN THE FRENCH...

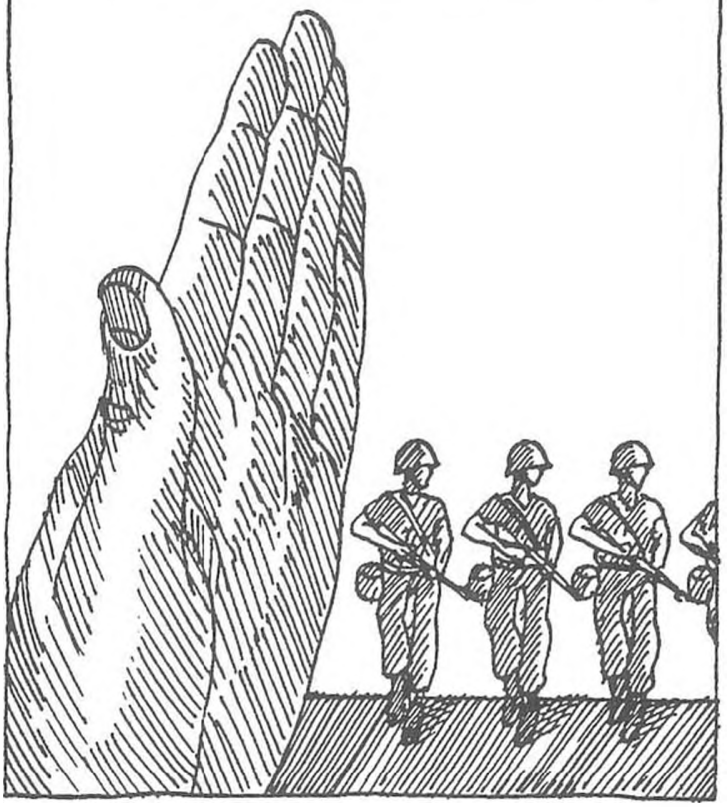


SURRENDERED BUT PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON, WHO WAS THEN STILL JUST A UNITED STATES SENATOR SAID HE WAS AGAINST "SENDING AMERICAN G.I.'S... ON A BLOOD-LETTING SPREE TO PERPETUATE COLONIALISM AND WHITE MAN'S EXPLOITATION OF ASIA."

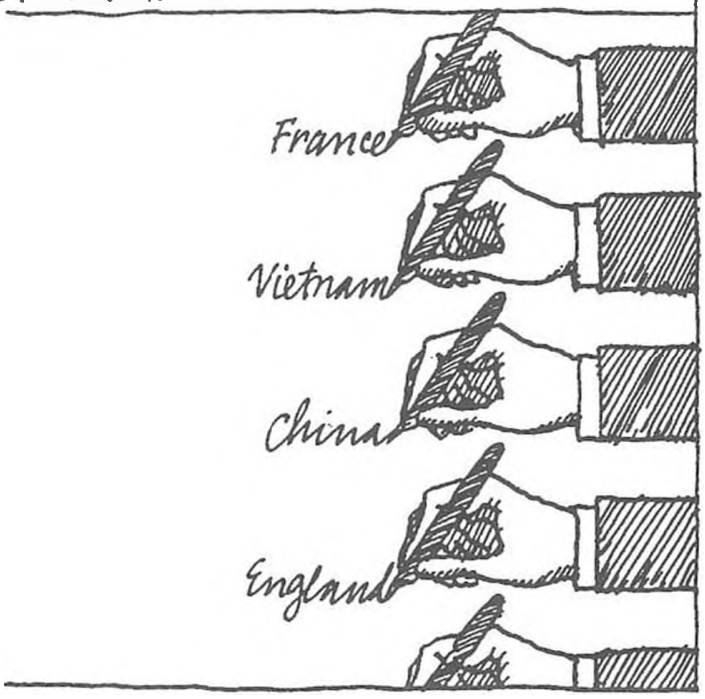
IN 1954, FRANCE AND THE VIETNAMESE AGREED TO STOP FIGHTING AND TO DIVIDE THE COUNTRY IN HALF UNTIL AN ELECTION COULD BE HELD AND THE COUNTRY UNITED AGAIN.



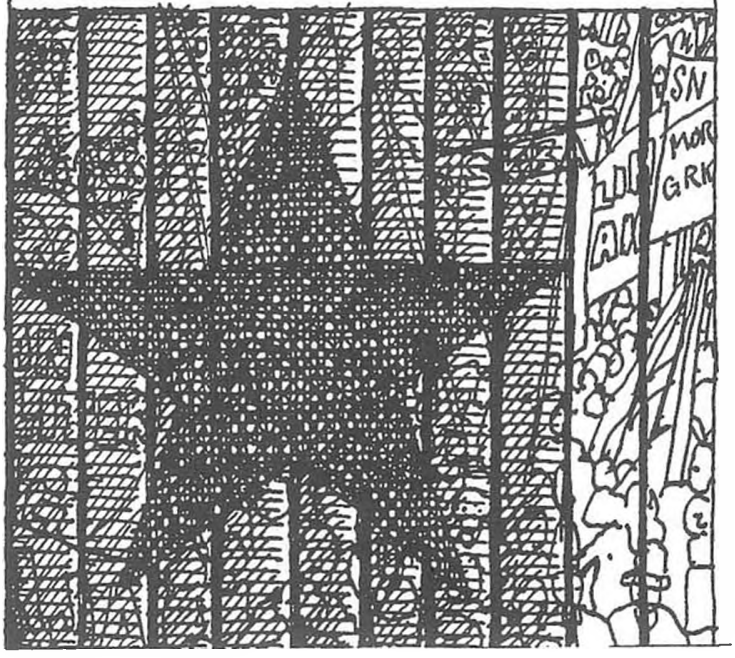
THEY ALSO AGREED THAT NO SOLDIERS OR WEAPONS FROM ANY COUNTRY WOULD COME INTO VIETNAM.



FRANCE, VIETNAM, CHINA, ENGLAND, RUSSIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES SIGNED THIS AGREEMENT. THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT SIGN, BUT WE AGREED WE WOULD NOT TRY TO OVERTHROW THE AGREEMENT BY FORCE.



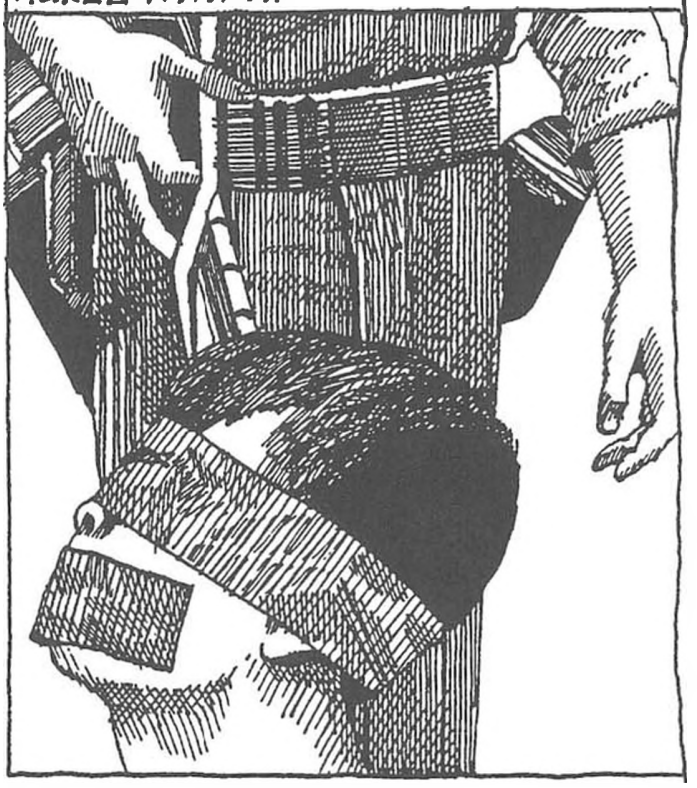
THE UNITED STATES DIDN'T WANT AN ELECTION IN VIETNAM. PRESIDENT EISENHOWER SAID IF AN ELECTION WAS HELD "POSSIBLY 80 PER CENT OF THE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE VOTED FOR THE COMMUNIST HO CHI MINH AS THEIR LEADER.



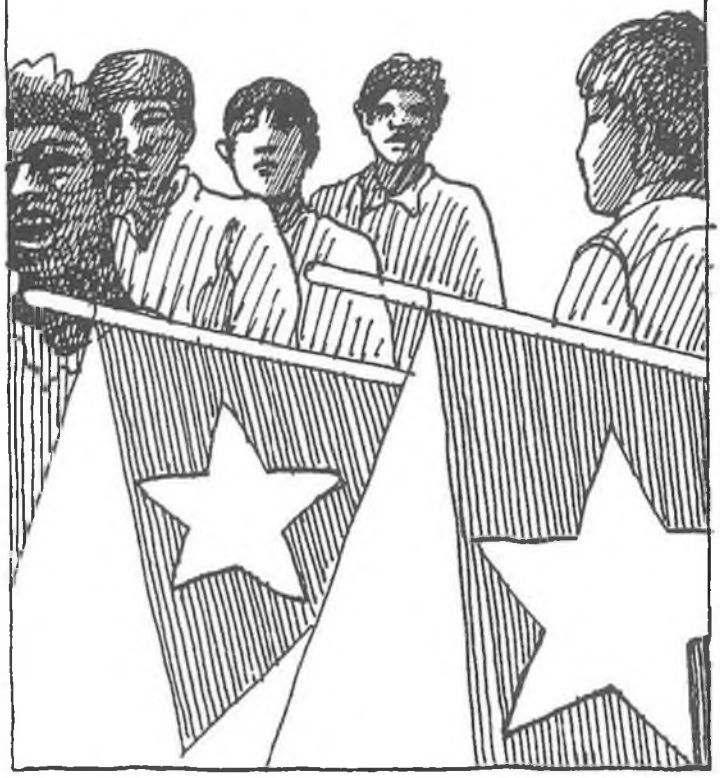
BECAUSE WE DIDN'T WANT THE PEOPLE OF VIETNAM TO SELECT A MAN WE DIDN'T LIKE, WE SET UP A MAN NAMED NGO DINH DIEM AS PRESIDENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND HELPED HIM HOLD TWO ELECTIONS IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY.

THE ELECTIONS VIOLATED THEAGREEMENT WHICH HAD ENDED THE FIGHTING.

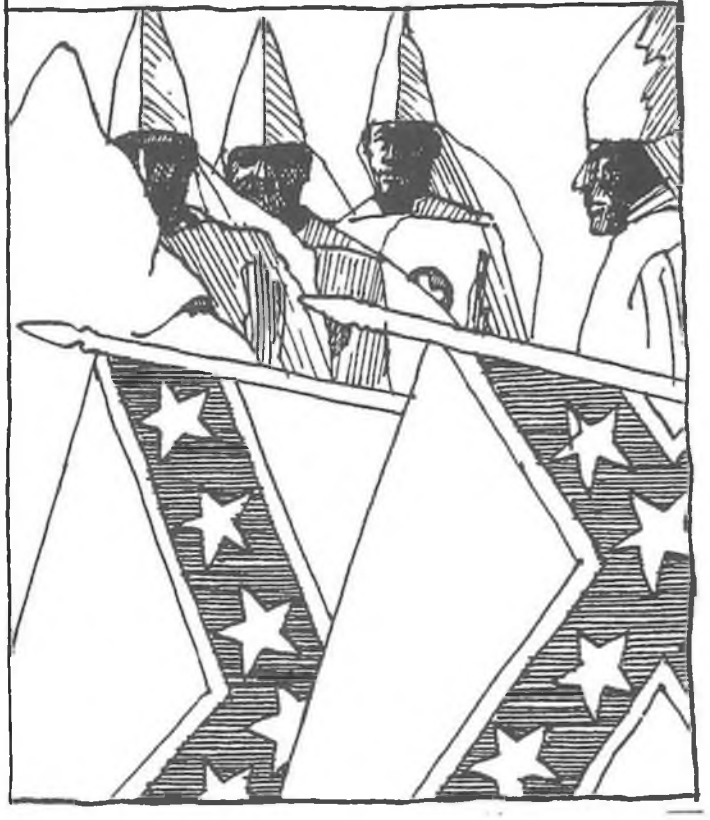
THE DIEM GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM ARRESTED, TORTURED AND KILLED MANY PEOPLE WHO DID NOT AGREE WITH IT.

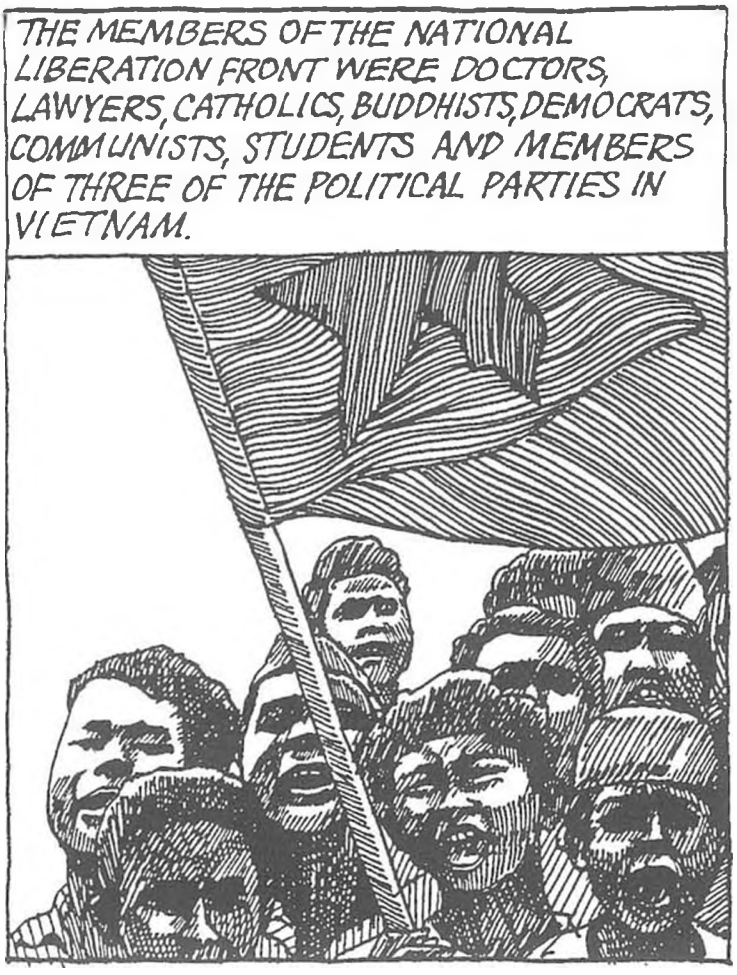


IN DECEMBER, 1960, THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT WAS FORMED.



SOME PEOPLE HERE CALLED IT THE "VIET CONG" LIKE PEOPLE WHO DON'T LIKE NEGROES CALL US "NIGGERS."

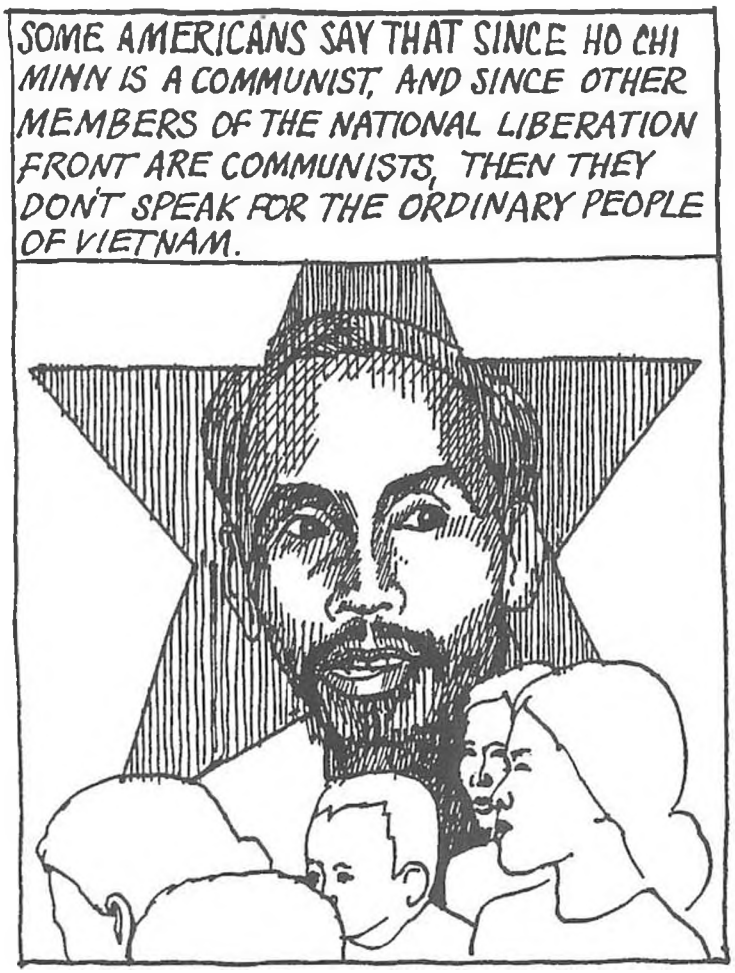


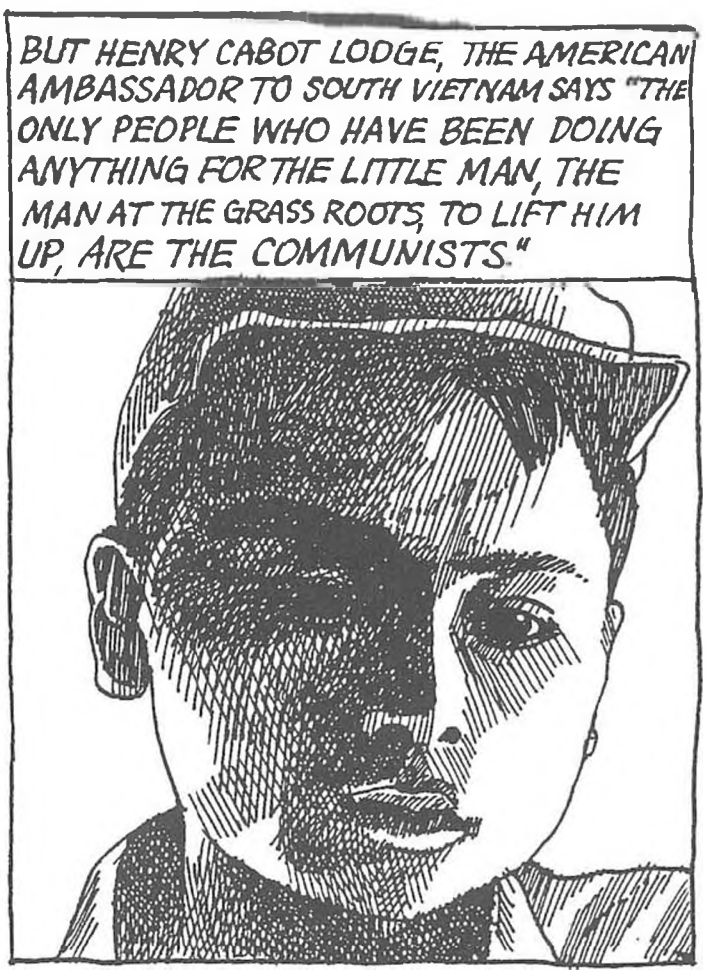

THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT WERE DOCTORS, LAWYERS, CATHOLICS, BUDDHISTS, DEMOCRATS, COMMUNISTS, STUDENTS AND MEMBERS OF THREE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN VIETNAM.

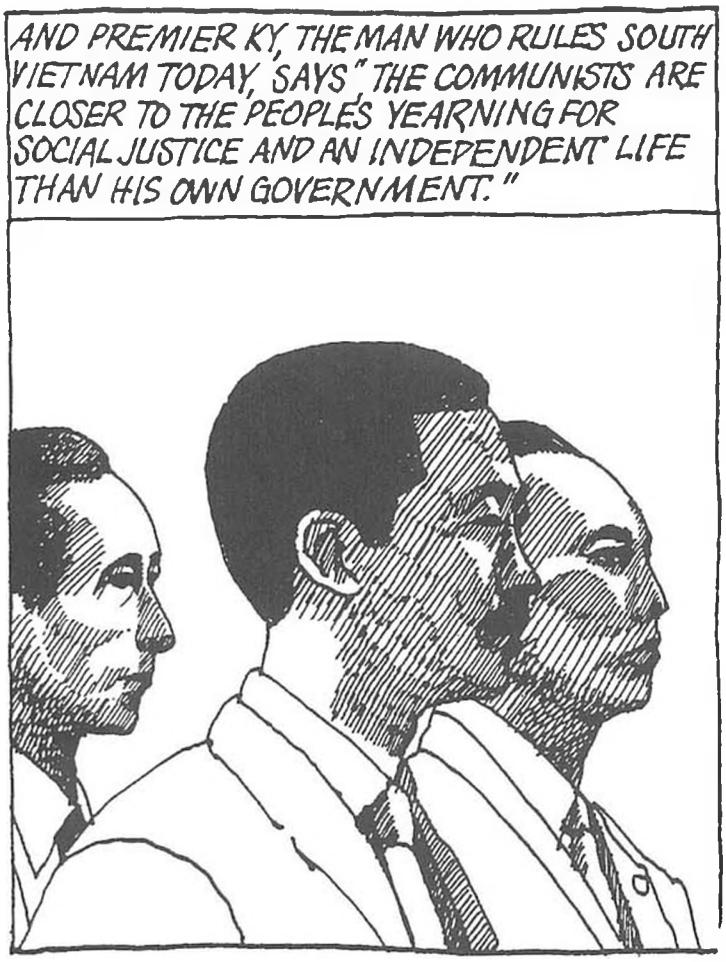

THEY BEGAN TO FIGHT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM.


THE DIEM GOVERNMENT ASKED THE UNITED STATES FOR MILITARY ADVISERS TO HELP TRAIN THE VIETNAMESE ARMY.


THERE ARE NOW MORE THAN 400,000 AMERICAN MEN FIGHTING IN VIETNAM.

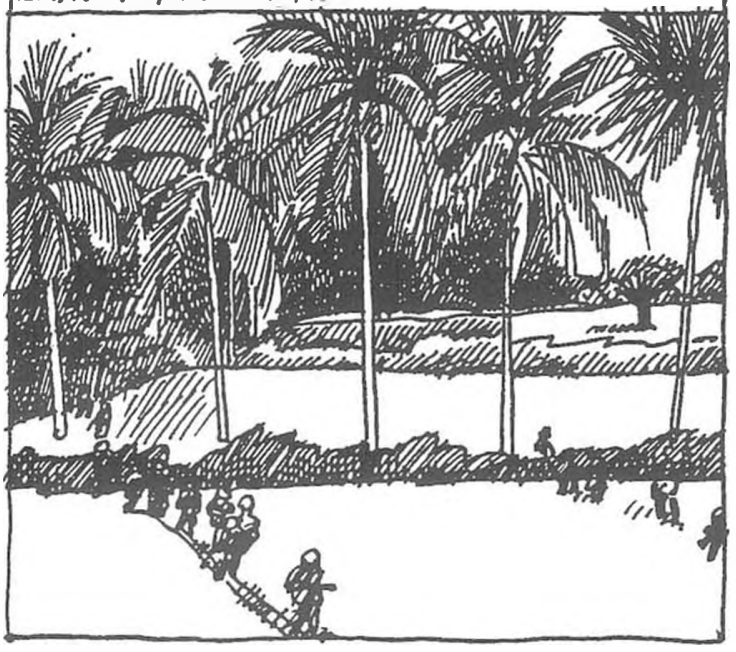

SOME AMERICANS SAY THAT SINCE HO CHI MINN IS A COMMUNIST, AND SINCE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT ARE COMMUNISTS, THEN THEY DON'T SPEAK FOR THE ORDINARY PEOPLE OF VIETNAM.


BUT HENRY CABOT LODGE, THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM SAYS "THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN DOING ANYTHING FOR THE LITTLE MAN, THE MAN AT THE GRASS ROOTS, TO LIFT HIM UP, ARE THE COMMUNISTS."

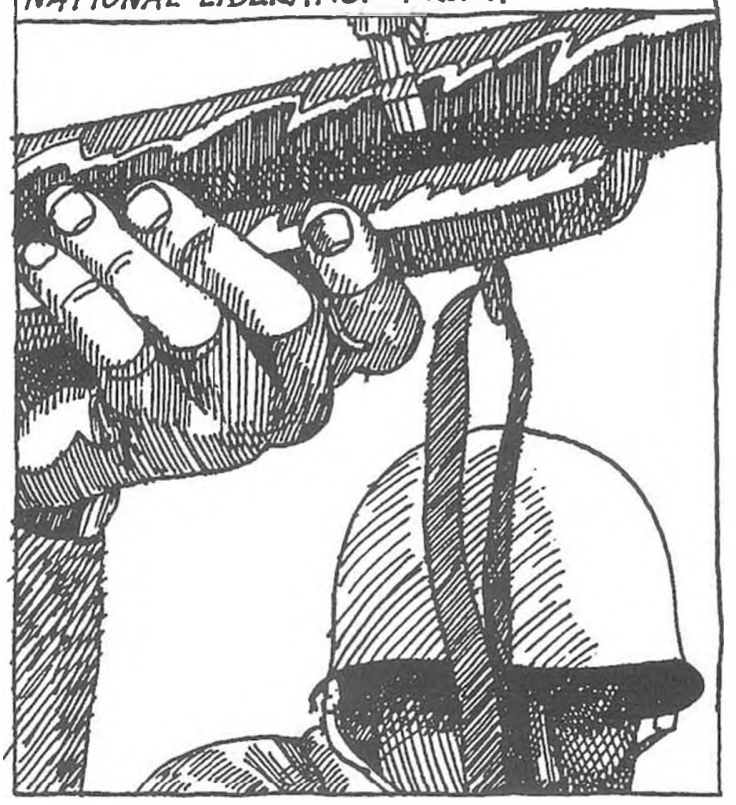

AND PREMIER KY, THE MAN WHO RULES SOUTH VIETNAM TODAY, SAYS "THE COMMUNISTS ARE CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE'S YEARNING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND AN INDEPENDENT LIFE THAN HIS OWN GOVERNMENT."


MANY AMERICAN GENERALS SAY WE CAN WIN IN VIETNAM.

BUT GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR, PRESIDENT (AND FORMER GENERAL) DWIGHT EISENHOWER, GENERAL MATTHEW RIDGEWAY, GENERAL MAXWELL TAYLOR, GENERAL JAMES CAVIN AND GENERAL OMAR BRADLEY HAVE ALL SAID AMERICA SHOULD NOT HAVE LARGE NUMBERS OF TROOPS FIGHTING A LAND WAR IN ASIA.

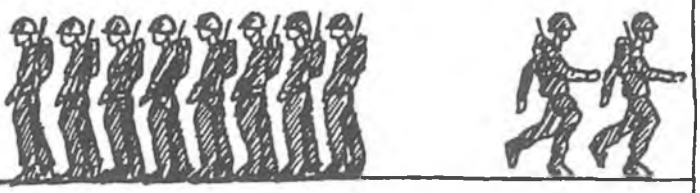


THE UNITED STATES SAYS WE ARE FIGHTING IN VIETNAM BECAUSE OUR GOVERNMENT DOESN'T LIKE THE PROGRAMS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT.

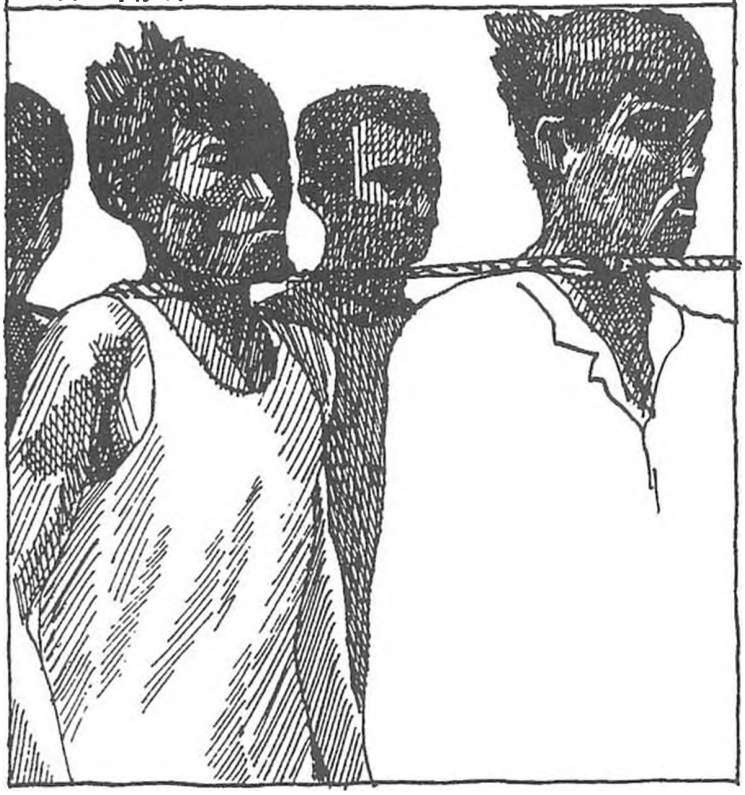


BUT THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT SAYS IT WANTS FREE ELECTIONS REPRESENTING ALL INTERESTS, LAND REFORMS AND ALL DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS.

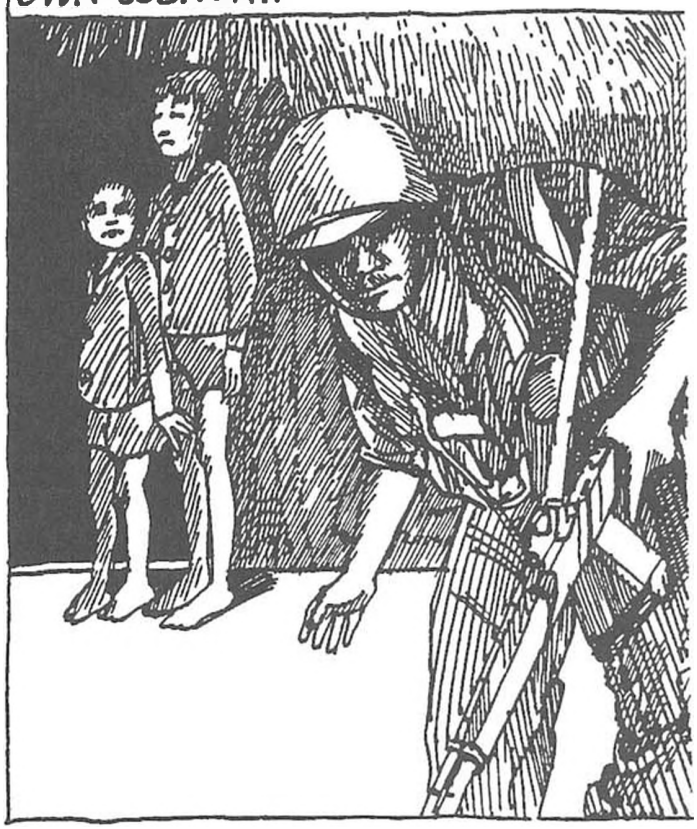
WE SAY THE PEOPLE OF VIETNAM SUPPORT THE WAR, BUT 20 PER CENT OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY DESERTED IN 1965.



WE SAY THE PEOPLE WE ARE FIGHTING THERE ARE OUTSIDERS FROM NORTH VIETNAM. BUT ONLY 6 PER CENT OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT'S ARMY IS FROM NORTH VIETNAM.

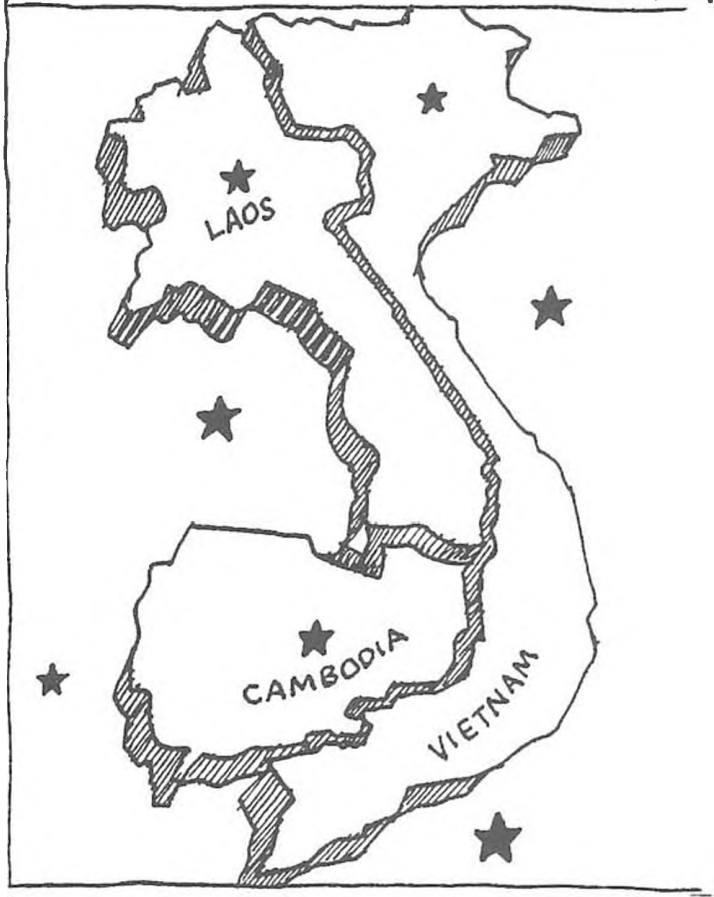


THE OTHERS ARE FROM THE SOUTH AND ARE FIGHTING OUTSIDERS – THE UNITED STATES – FOR THE FREEDOM OF THEIR OWN COUNTRY.



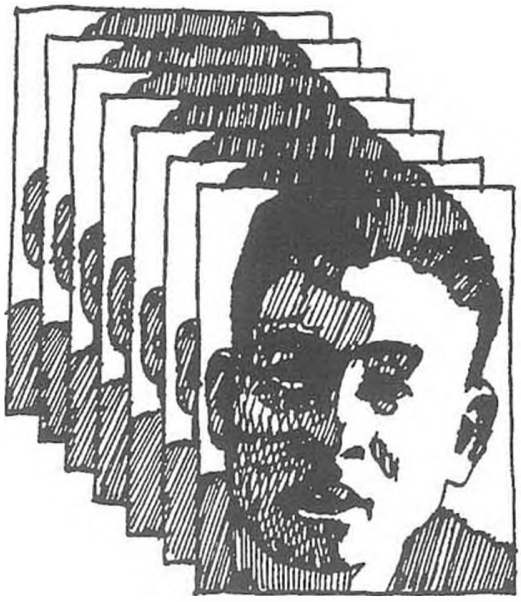
WE SAY WE FIGHT IN VIETNAM TO FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNIST CHINESE AGRESSION IN SOUTH VIET NAM. BUT THERE ARE NO CHINESE TROOPS FIGHTING IN VIETNAM, NORTH OR SOUTH.

WE SAY IF SOUTH VIETNAM GOES COMMUNIST THEN SO WILL EVERY OTHER COUNTRY NEARBY

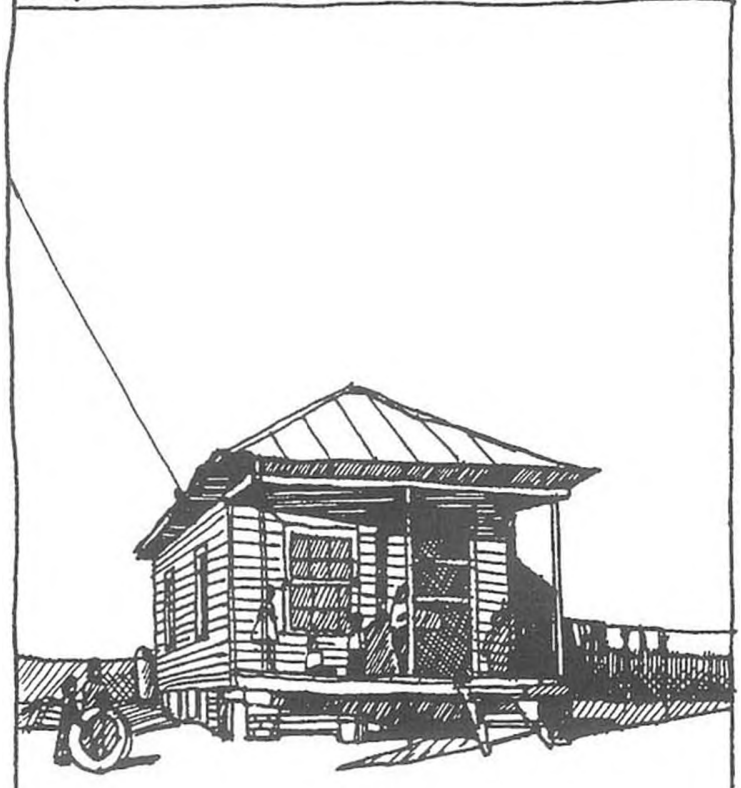


BUT WE ALSO SAY WE WANT THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT, AND THEN WE WON'T EVEN LET COMMUNISTS RUN FOR OFFICE.

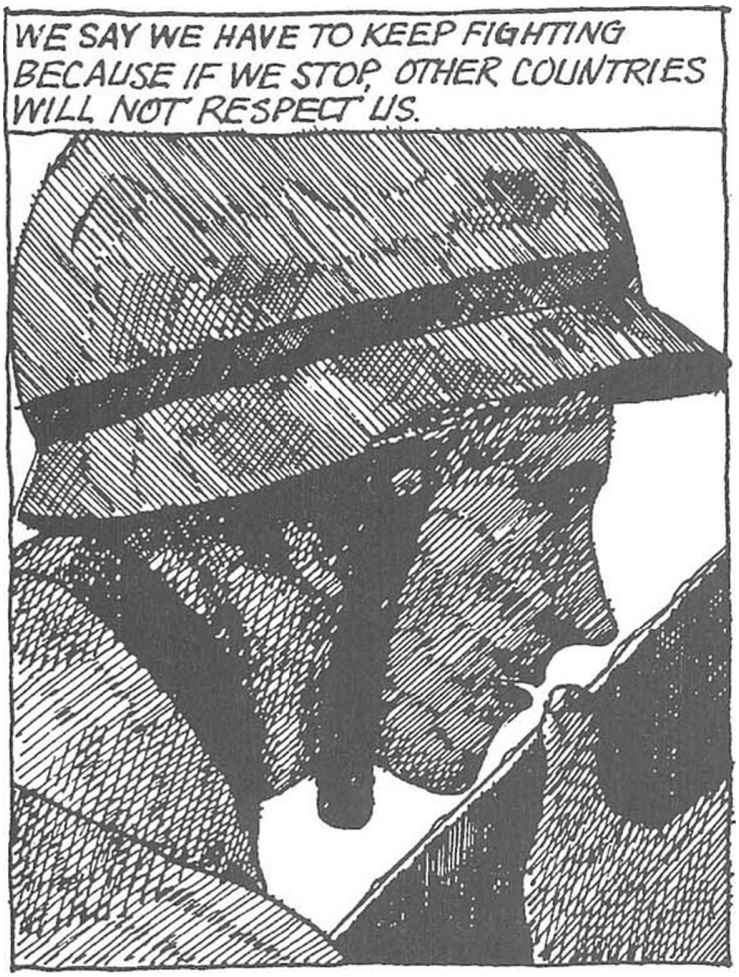
WE SAY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT NEGOTIATE WITH US, BUT THEY HAVE TRIED TO TALK WITH US SEVEN TIMES SINCE SEPTEMBER, 1964.

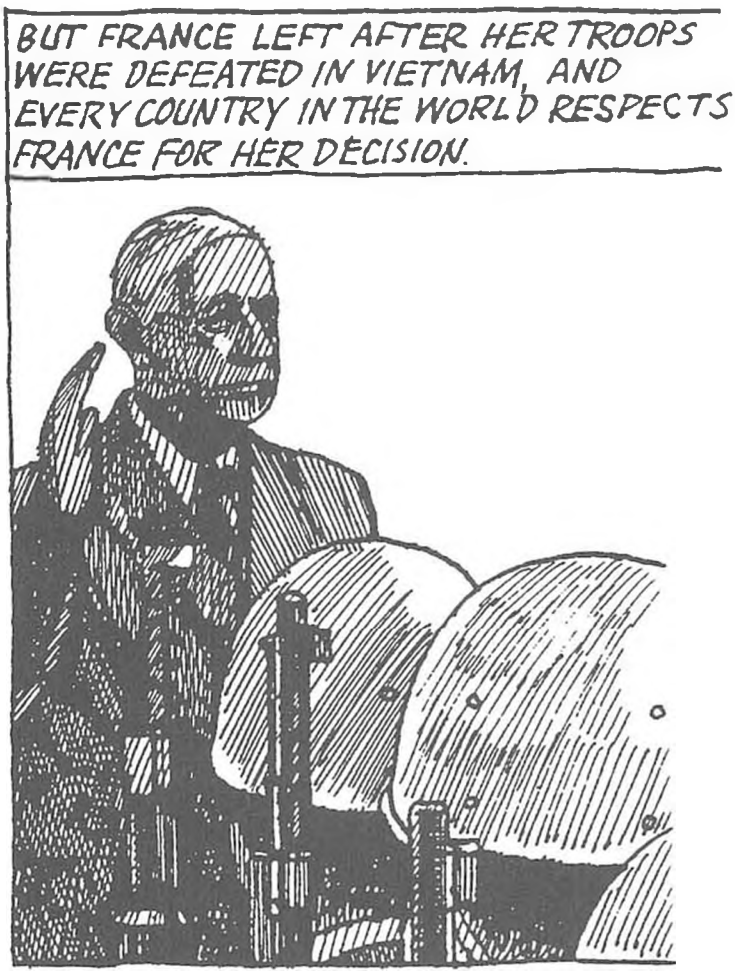


WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT FIGHTING A WAR AGAINST POVERTY IN AMERICA.



BUT WE SPEND $499,999.96 FOR EVERY ENEMY SOLDIER WE KILL OR CAPTURE WHILE PEOPLE STARVE AND GO WITHOUT GOOD JOBS AT HOME.

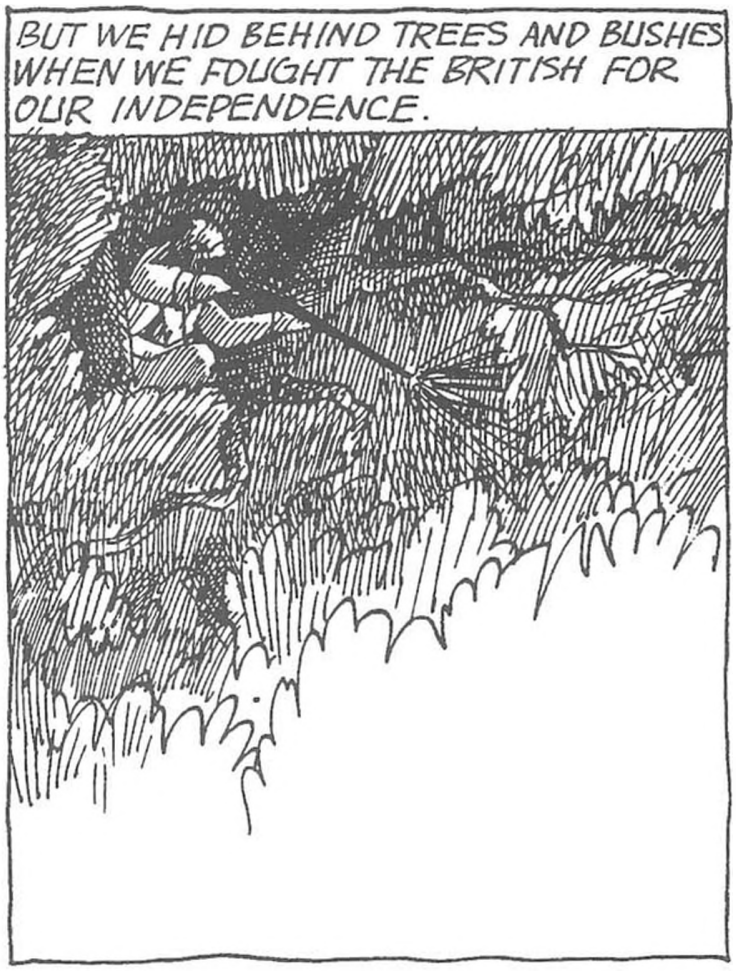

WE SAY WE HAVE TO KEEP FIGHTING BECAUSE IF WE STOP, OTHER COUNTRIES WILL NOT RESPECT US.


BUT FRANCE LEFT AFTER HER TROOPS WERE DEFEATED IN VIETNAM, AND EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD RESPECTS FRANCE FOR HER DECISION.


WE SAY THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT DOES NOT FIGHT FAIRLY BECAUSE THEY HIDE BEHIND TREES AND BUSHES,


BECAUSE THEY TAKE LAND FROM THE RICH AND GIVE IT TO THE POOR.


BECAUSE THEY KILL THEIR ENEMIES.

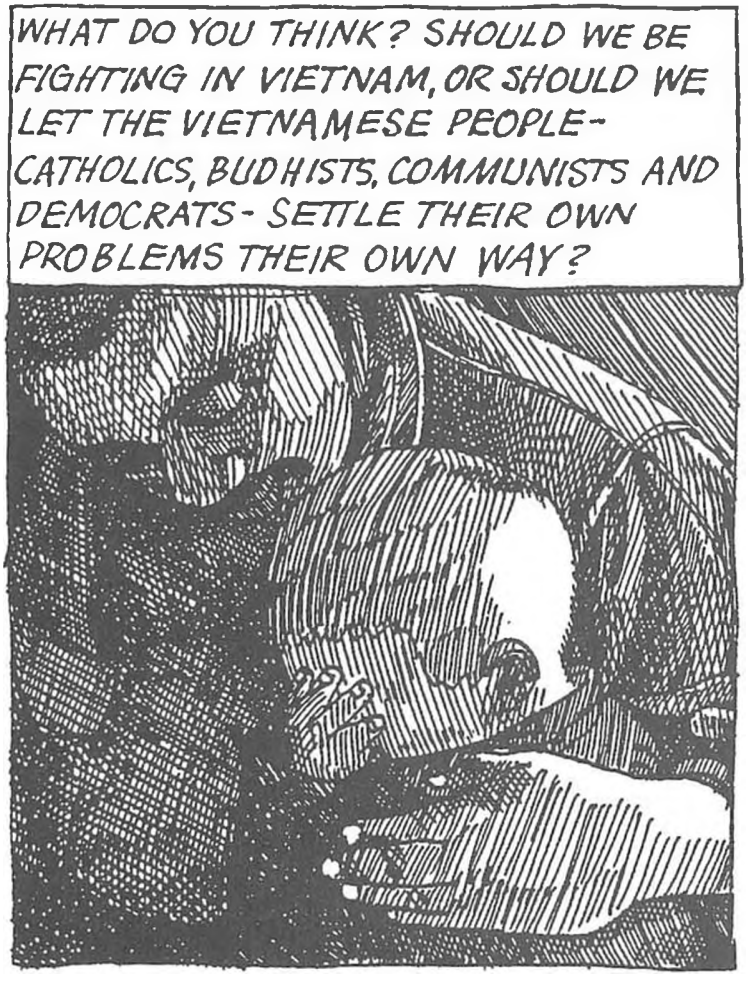

BUT WE HID BEHIND TREES AND BUSHES WHEN WE FOUGHT THE BRITISH FOR OUR INDEPENDENCE.

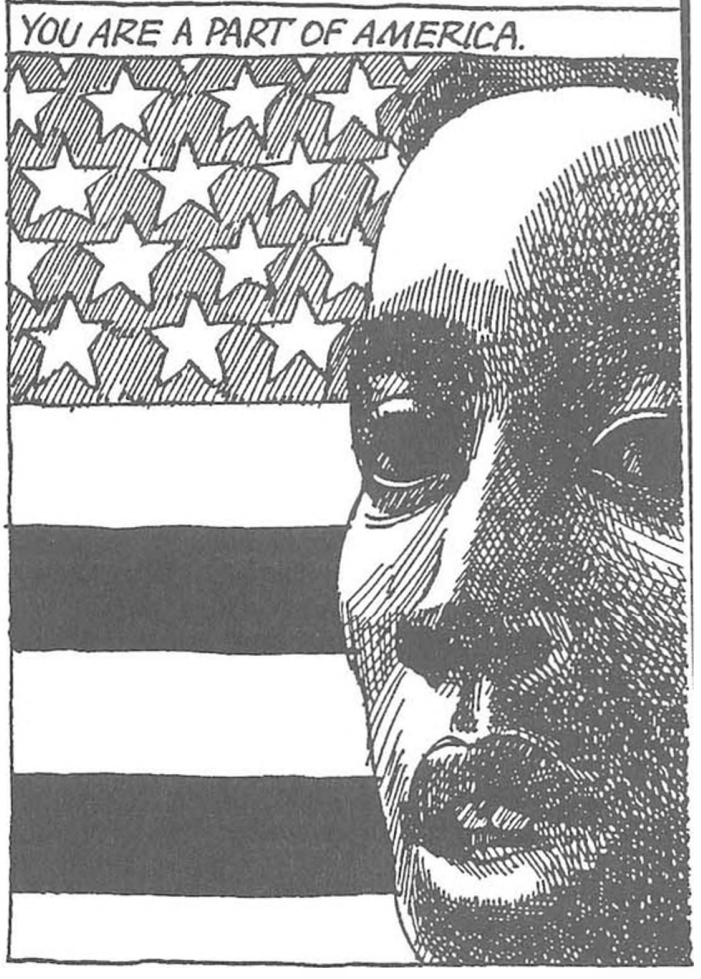

WE ASKED FOR HELP FROM ANY COUNTRY THAT WOULD GIVE IT TO US (FRANCE, SPAIN AND HOLLAND DID GIVE US TROOPS AND AID).


WE TARRED AND FEATHERED AND KILLED OUR ENEMIES, AND TOOK THEIR LAND.

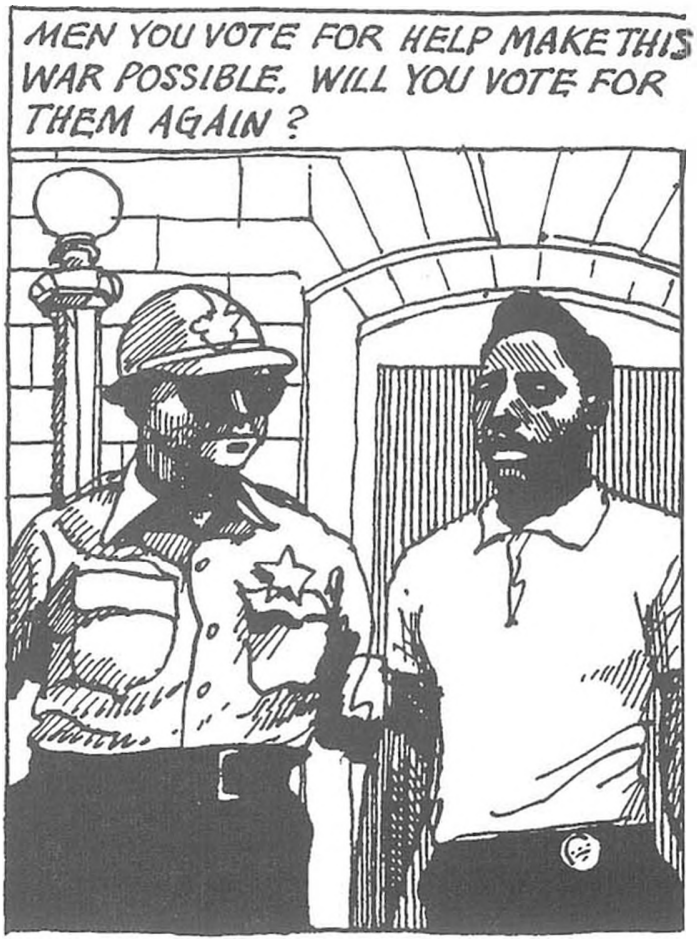

THE PEOPLE OF VIETNAM ARE FIGHTING THEIR OWN WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE.

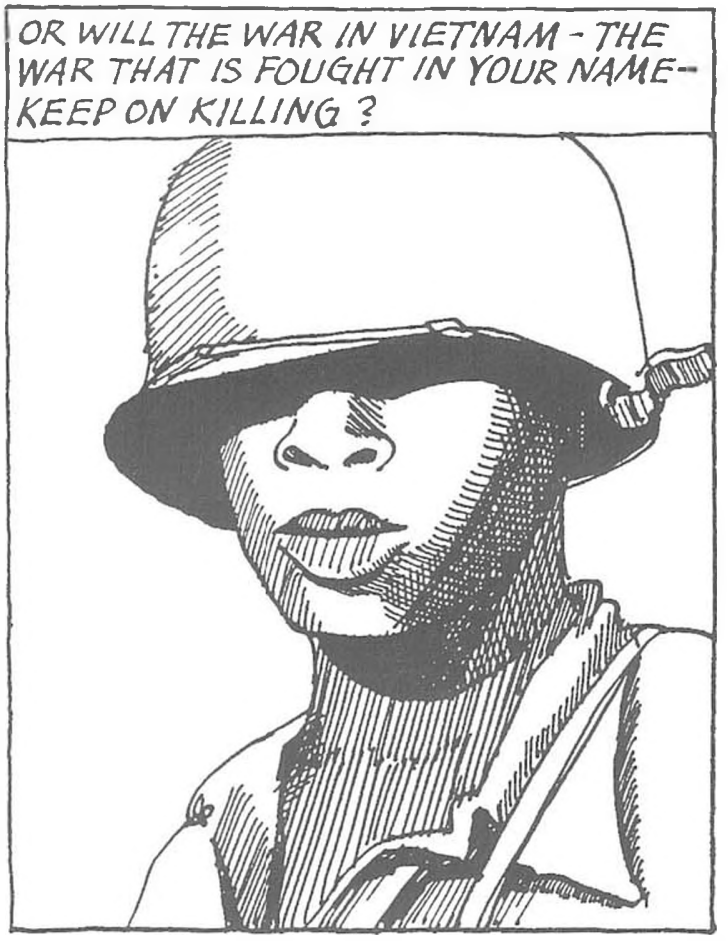

THEY WANT TO RUN THEIR OWN COUNTRY, AND DON'T WANT ANYONE- AMERICANS, FRENCH, CHINESE OR RUSSIAN- TO TELL THEM HOW TO DO IT


WHAT DO YOU THINK? SHOULD WE BE FIGHTING IN VIETNAM, OR SHOULD WE LET THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE- CATHOLICS, BUDHISTS, COMMUNISTS AND DEMOCRATS- SETTLE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS THEIR OWN WAY?


YOU ARE A PART OF AMERICA.


YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE A PART OF THE GOVERNMENT.
REGISTER To Vote


MEN YOU VOTE FOR HELP MAKE THIS WAR POSSIBLE. WILL YOU VOTE FOR THEM AGAIN ?


OR WILL THE WAR IN VIETNAM - THE WAR THAT IS FOUGHT IN YOUR NAME-- KEEP ON KILLING ?


WHAT DO YOU THINK ?

Race Riot at "LBJ"

John W. Williams, Political Science, Principia College, Elsah, IL 62028. Based upon paper original given at Popular Culture Association, Louisville, KY, March 1992

Introduction

Race relations in the U.S. military received high visibility in 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. General Colin Powell, a black American born of Jamaican parents, served as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the most powerful American in uniform. Powell first saw combat as a young officer in the Viet Nam war. That war witnessed growing tension between races, sometimes breaking out in overt violence. Riots broke out between black and white soldiers and airmen and temporarily-closed Travis Air Force Base, the central transit point for troops heading to the war zone, in May 1971. A riot between black and white sailors incapacitated the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Kitty Hawk in October 1972, which had to leave its battle station off the Vietnamese coast. But except in rare instances such as these, the racial tensions of the war received little public or media attention.

In her paper "Black Men With Guns," Katherine Kinney referred to an August 1968 uprising by American soldiers imprisoned in the military stockade at Long Binh, some 18 miles outside of Saigon.[1] She noted how, in spite of the fact that "just 18 miles away was the largest concentration of reporters in the world," the story was barely covered by the American media.

On August 30, 1968, the American prisoners in the Long Binh military stockade or jail (hence the reference to "LBJ") rioted. Initial public reports listed one inmate killed, 58 inmates and five military policemen injured before the military police used tear gas to quell the disturbance. Although the prisoners were predominantly black, the single death was of a white inmate. The following day, in a report calling the riot a "rampage," the number of injured inmates was lowered to 24. Following a quick Army investigation, the U.S. command announced that racial tensions caused the riot. The command also claimed that most of the inmate injuries were caused by inmates fighting among themselves. Nearly a month later, 12 black inmates were still holding out in a section of the stockade. Eventually six of the black inmates accused of starting the riot were charged with the murder or conspiracy to commit the murder of the white inmate.

Earlier in August, American prisoners in the Marine Corps brig at Da Nang rioted and set fire to cell blocks. Seven inmates and one guard were reported injured. Although at first reported to be under control, new rioting erupted in the brig and the military police used tear gas to quell the riot. Two months later, in response to a weekend of incidents "with racial overtones" and tension between blacks and whites, the U.S. Navy imposed restriction on movement in the Da Nang region.

It has become generally accepted that reality is what is reported by the news organizations.[2] Mediated reality, therefore, is much like the parable of the tree falling in the forest. If there was no one around to hear it, did it make a sound? Likewise, if the falling tree was not reported by the media, did it really fall? More importantly, do we remember that it fell? The riot at LBJ raises questions about mediated reality and mediated memory. This paper is a case study of the media's coverage of the race riot at LBJ.

Research Question and Methodology

The questions driving this study are simple. Was the riot at the Long Binh jail covered by the American media? If so, how was it covered? My hypothesis, as suggested by Kinney, is that the riot was not reported. Further, was the riot recorded in the history of the war? If so, how was it remembered?

The predominant news media of the late Sixties included the nightly news broadcasts of the three television networks, a number of the leading daily newspapers (including the *New York Times*) and several wide-circulation weekly news magazines (including *Newsweek* and *Time*). This collection of media has come to be known as the prestige press.[3]

The immediate coverage of the riot at Long Binh Jail was determined by a content analysis of the official indexes of four leading newspapers; seven periodical indexes including the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* and the *Public Affairs Information Service* for popular and general circulation magazines; and the *Television News Index and Abstracts* of the Vanderbilt Television News Archives.

Three American newspapers and one British newspaper were selected for this study—*The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and *The Times* (of London). The three American newspapers are widely recognized as part of the prestige press and are considered to be "national" newspapers.[4] The papers were chosen because each has a large circulation, each is regarded for its high quality, and they reflect geographic diversity. *The Times* is considered the newspaper of record for the United Kingdom and was selected to give perspective on the American reporting.

The *Readers Guide to Periodic Literature* and the *Public Affairs Information Service* were used in order to identify the coverage of the major American popular and general circulation news, commentary and analysis magazines, including those considered part of the prestige press, such as *Newsweek* and *Time*.

Because the riot raised legal issues, both for the military justice system and for the American judicial system facing legal challenges over the war and its opposition, the two leading indexes of legal periodical literature were examined. The *Index to Legal Periodicals* covers almost all American legal literature, including both professional and scholarly publications. Among the periodicals covered are professional magazines, such as the *ABA Journal*, and most law reviews published by law

schools, universities, professional associations, and commercial publishers. The *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals*, sponsored by the American Association of Law Libraries, is a comprehensive attempt to index all non-American and non-English language legal periodicals, especially those from Western legal systems.

Because the Long Binh Jail population was predominantly black, the *Index to Periodical Articles By and About Blacks* (cumulative index for 1960-1970) was also examined. This index covers 17 predominantly black periodicals in the collection of the Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio, and 14 predominantly black periodicals in the collection of the New York Public Library. Among the periodicals indexed are *Black Scholar*, *Ebony*, *Jet*, and the *Journal of Negro History*.

One of the major criticisms of the mainstream press, which this study considers, is its alleged failure to cover alternative or controversial viewpoints and events. A lively alternative press developed during the Viet Nam War. *The Alternative Press Index* began publication at the end of the period of study. Its first volume, covering 72 periodicals, spanned July-December 1969. Among the periodicals indexed are *Eyewitness*, *Punch*, the *Guardian*, *Ramparts*, *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, and *Dock of the Bay*.

Given the tumult the Viet Nam war caused within the American military establishment, *The Air University Library Index to Military Periodicals* was used in order to identify material published in approximately 70 military and military-related periodicals available to military leaders and personnel. The *Index* is sponsored by the Air University, the Air Force's leading institution of post-graduate learning, located at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

The *Combined Retrospective Index to Journals in History, 1838-1974* (Vol. IV) was also examined, in order to identify any professional and scholarly coverage of the riot. The Index covers approximately 600 American and English professional, intellectual and scholarly journals of history, political science, and sociology, including *Asian Survey*, *Broadsheet* (UK), *Current British Foreign Policy* (UK), *Far Eastern Economic Review*, and *Intelligence Digest* (UK).

The Television News Index and Abstracts of the Vanderbilt Television News Archives began indexing the nightly news broadcasts of the three major networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, on August 5, 1968, just before the riot at Long Binh erupted. Indexing of the networks' weekend broadcasts did not begin until May 1970.

A search was made of each index. First, all references to Long Binh and Long Binh Jail were identified and pursued. Most dealt with Long Binh as one of the largest American military installations in Viet Nam or with attacks on or around the Long Binh region. However, in almost all indexes, the primary category is Viet Nam rather than Long Binh. If the list of entries was short or not further broken down, all listings concerning Viet Nam were examined to identify any reference to Long Binh or Long Binh Jail. In most instances, the indexes were broken down into secondary categories, such as South Viet Nam, War in Vietnam, American Military in Vietnam, or Dissent to War in Vietnam. These and other reasonable alternative listings under which the incident might be indexed were searched. All entries concerning the incident were then examined.

By the nature of publishing, the news in newspapers, news magazines and professional journals appear on different cycles. Therefore, the scope of the search of each index was different. All newspaper and the television indexes were searched for the four months following the incident (August through December,1968). The magazine indexes were searched for the sixteen months (August 1968 through December 1969) following the incident. In a number of instances, because of the varying indexing spans of the specific indexes, longer periods of time were searched. The example, legal indexes were searched for 28 months following the incident (August 1968 through December 1970).

RESULTS—LONG BINH JAIL AS NEWS

The riot at Long Binh Jail was indexed in five articles in *The New York Times*: Aug. 30 (6:4), Sept. 1 (9:1), Sept. 4 (38:2), Sept. 25 (2:7), and Oct. 1 (3:2). In addition to these articles, there were two articles each about an earlier riot in the U.S. Marine Corps brig at Da Nang (Aug. 18, 4:1; Aug. 19, 5:1) and the subsequent racial tension in Da Nang city (Oct. 21, 11:1; Oct. 22, 7:1). Neither of the Da Nang riot stories mentioned any racial issues. There were no other articles indexed and abstracted with references to Long Binh Jail, the Da Nang brig or racial tensions during the four month period. None of the articles received front page coverage.

The first *New York Times* story about LBJ, three paragraphs on page 6, was datelined Saigon, dated August 30, 1968, and listed a "special to *The New York Times*." It briefly summarized the basic facts of the "rampage," including "one inmate was killed" and "scores of buildings were burned." Race or racial issues were not mentioned.

Subsequent short articles (Sept. 1, page 9 and Sept. 4, page 38, from AP) noted that the U.S. command acknowledged that "racial incidents caused the riot," although no specifics were given. Military spokesmen "refused to elaborate on the racial aspects of the incidents." The military did release the name of the dead inmate, Private Edward O. Haskett of St. Petersburg, Florida. A short Sept. 25 (page 2) piece (based on UPI) reported "12 still holding out in Longbinh [*sic*] prison." It referred to the remaining rioters as Negroes and to the earlier rioting as "racial." A final story on Oct. 1 (page 3) reported that "six Negro prisoners...will be charged with murder or conspiracy to commit murder." The charges were based on "the slaying of a white inmate...beaten with a shovel." No further mention was made of race or racial issues.

The Da Nang and LBJ riots were covered in separate articles in *The Times* of London (August 19 and August 30). The first article, a front page story, reported the riot in the Marine brig. The second story, on page 5, only noted the killing of a prisoner at LBJ. Long Binh Jail was not covered by *The Christian Science Monitor* or the *Wall*

Street Journal during the four month period from August to December 1968.

Long Binh Jail was not indexed in *The Air University Library Index of Military Periodicals* (all entries under all variations of Viet Nam for 1968 and 1969), the *Index to Periodical Articles By and About Blacks* (all entries under all variations of Viet Nam through 1970), the *Index to Legal Periodicals* (all entries under all variations of Viet Nam through August 1970), the *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals* (all entries under all variations of Vietnam through 1970), *Reader's Guide To Periodic Literature* or the *Public Affairs Information Service* (all entries under all variations of Vietnam from October 1968 through September 1969). However, in her paper, Kinney made reference to an article about the incident appearing in *Newsweek*. Therefore, a direct search of the contents of *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *U.S. News and World Report* was conducted of the issues from August through December 1986. Only the first two magazines reported the incident.

Time reported the story first (Sept. 6, 1968) in a seven-inch story entitled "The War: Riot at the L.B.J." The story, without any pictures or graphics, shared the page with the stories of the killing of John Gordon Mein, the first U.S. ambassador to be assassinated, in Guatemala, and consolidation of power by Argentina's president Juan Carlos Ongania. Both of these stories were accompanied by photographs. The riot story began:

> The L.B.J., as its inmates call the Long Binh Jail, is like army stockades everywhere: not much worse than Stateside prisons, or more uncomfortable than the ordinary barracks of South Viet Nam.... Last week the L.B.J. completed the list with its first serious riot. The trouble was set off by a fist fight between two prisoners.... By the time the gas cleared, one prisoner was dead, his skull crushed, 23 were hospitalized, and 35 more needed treatment for lesser wounds. In addition, five guards, including the garrison commander, were in the hospital.

The article continued: "For all the riot's viciousness, the inmates offered no grievances to explain their outbreak beyond the normal gripes of prison life." The riot was compared to the earlier riot at Da Nang. The article made no mention of racial tension nor of the race of any of the participants, including the dead inmate.

The *Newsweek* article appeared on "The War in Vietnam" page nearly a month later (Sept. 30, 1968), and over a month after the riot began. It was headlined "Race Riot at Long Binh" and opened with an introductory editorial paragraph which stated: "[I]t has gradually emerged that the worst prison riot in the modern history of the U.S. Army had profoundly racial overtones." The 17-inch article opened: "The Aug. 29 riot at Long Binh began with a ruckus between a relatively small number of blacks and whites...." According to the article, "the troublemakers" overpowered the first group of guards and the riot expanded throughout the stockade. "The black rebels" proceeded to unlock cells and set fire to buildings. "[S]ome 250 hard-core insurgents, the majority of them black, defiantly held their ground...." When the Military Police retook the compound, 70 "black rebels" were wounded. "And one white inmate lay dead, reportedly clubbed to death by black prisoners." The prisoners were sorted into "cooperatives" and "uncooperatives." The 220 uncooperatives were all black, except for three Puerto Ricans.

As the article noted, the crisis was not over. "Black militants" continued to hold out. "The men in command at Long Binh decided not to crack down on the militants but rather to 'wait them out'." According to the article, "most of the blacks complained that white guards had often abused them verbally and had given white prisoners far better treatment."

The article concluded with an editorial paragraph:

> By military standards, the Army's handling of the holdouts was incredibly permissive—and, to a degree, the policy of restraint did work out. Last week, 21 days after the riot, only thirteen rebels were still defying prison discipline. Nonetheless, the riot at LBJ would seem to have ominous import both for the Army and for U.S. society as a whole. Since Harry Truman integrated the armed forces in 1948, the Army has been justly proud of the opportunities it offers black soldiers. And, for the most part, relations between white and black troops in Vietnam have been good, especially in combat zones where they share common needs and common dangers. But in Long Binh stockade, with these bonds dissolved, black soldiers, rightly or wrongly, felt they faced the same kind of prejudice that they had in the ghettos of the U.S. and quickly rediscovered their built-in resentment of authority. All of which seemed to suggest that the vaunted egalitarianism of the Army cannot, by itself, erase the ingrained tensions that unfortunately exist between white and black Americans.

The impact of the article was offset by the other piece on the page, entitled "No Admirals." It was a "feel-good" story about "a thoroughly routine Army affairs"—the promotion of Col. Frederic Ellis Davison to brigadier general. Davison was only the third black to become a general. Accompanied by a picture of General Creighton Abrams pinning the stars on Davison, the story ended:

> Davison, 51, is also a real Army man. Proud that his branch of the service has made "unbelievable" progress toward the elimination of race prejudice, he celebrated his promotion by aiming a barb at the Navy. "As you can see," he said, "we [Negroes] have no admirals. But we're working on it."

Long Binh was referred to four times on network television during the second half of 1968 according to the Vanderbilt Television News Archives Abstracts. Upon inspection, only two of the stories (9/24/68, 9/30/68) concerned the riot. On Tuesday, September 24, CBS anchor Walter Cronkite, as part of a larger story about events in the war, reported the riot. The story had a Saigon dateline and was based on information from UPI. According to the *Abstracts*,

> Riot with racial overtones occurs at servicemen's stockade at Long Binh month ago. One white soldier killed and 65 G.I.s hurt. UPI reports that 12 black

> prisoners still control sections of stockade. They are receiving food and water, but are ignored; hoped they'll rejoin rest of men.[5]

The following Monday, September 30, Cronkite, again as a part of a larger piece on events in the war, referred to the incident:

> Six black soldiers involved in riot at Long Binh Stockade will be tried for murder or conspiracy to commit murder. One white soldier killed.[6]

As noted in the story, the initial CBS report was a month old and was apparently dependent on UPI. According to the *Index*, neither ABC nor NBC reported or made any reference to the incident. None of the networks apparently pursued the story.

Discussion

For the vast majority of people, reality is mediated. Because we are unable to experience many things first hand, we have come to rely on media to inform us as to what has occurred. As a result, what we know as reality is what we have been told. If it is not reported, it did not happen. Hence, it was not "real." And, regardless of how accurate the media attempt to be, the process of mediation distorts reality.

There are several explanations for the apparent lack of coverage of the race riot at LBJ. The first is an inherent flaw in the research method and its dependence of periodical indexes. The second is that the media tends to ignore certain stories, such as race riots in military prisons in war zones. The third explanation reflects the inherent nature of the limited resources of the media, and the tendency to focus them on the "hot topics" of the hour. Finally, the military command could have intentionally buried, covered up, or censored the story.

There are weaknesses in the search for coverage of the LBJ riot. Perhaps the major shortcoming of this study is its dependence on the quality (or lack of quality) of indexing of the various media. The failure of the major indexes to list the articles in *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines is a key example. Additionally, there is no easy method for searching the alternative media, the most likely sector to cover such an event, for its coverage. The *Alternative Press Index* did not begin until a year after the riot and is only indexed back to July 1969. Furthermore, most of the periodicals are not readily available.

This study examined how the media, in particular the prestige press, reported one specific event that occurred during the Vietnam War. For those concerned with opposition to the war and with race relations, the riot at Long Binh Jail was an important event. However, as this study has confirmed, the event was not reported by the prestige press. What little reporting occurred was dependent on the wire services, AP and UPI. The initial stories were simple though factual. The later stories, usually much shorter, did mention the racial nature of the riot. None of the stories—newspaper, magazine, television—analyzed the issues or circumstances. The "best" coverage, if it can be called that, was by *Newsweek*, a month after the riot had occurred. It cannot be said that the prestige press ignored the riot. In a limited sense, they gave the situation "space" or "airtime."

Fall 1968 was a busy news period. A race riot in an unpopular war was not the only news of the day. The nation was still recovering from Robert Kennedy's assassination two months earlier. The Democratic Party's national convention occurred in late August, resulting in massive, nationally televised anti-war protests and riots which have come to be remembered as "the days of rage." The 1968 presidential contest between Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon soon followed. August was also the end of the famous "Czech spring of 1968" as Soviet troops invaded and crushed the liberalism movement in Czechoslovakia. Smaller stories, such as the assassination of Ambassador John Mein (the first American ambassador to be killed on duty), also dominated the headlines and cover pages. When weighing the LBJ riot against these competing stories, it is understandable how the riot would quickly surface and disappear.

Curiously, every medium, including *Newsweek*, indicated that the military acknowledged the racial nature of the riot. Apparently, the U.S. command did not try to suppress the racial nature of the situation. The wire services had immediate access to the story. None of the reports hinted at a cover-up or censorship. Exposure of the riot as a racial issue was not a coup for the media. By their own acknowledgment, it was given to them by the military authorities. Vietnam stands as our least censored war, at least by the military and governmental authorities.

The race riot at LBJ was covered, barely. It appeared and quickly disappeared. The explanation for this situation is probably in the nature of the news media, rather than in deliberate censorship, either governmental or self-initiated. Nevertheless, the story and the underlying problem of race relations were not covered with any depth or thoroughness. Only the Travis AFB and U.S.S. Kitty Hawk riots several years later grabbed the public's and the media's attention. One of the results is that the LBJ riot does not exist in the mediated reality that has become the history of the Vietnam War. In effect, LBJ did not exist.

Notes

[1] Katherine Kinney, "Black Men With Guns," Paper presented at Vietnam Section Panel on Popular Heroes in Vietnam War Literature, Popular Culture Association Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas, March 29, 1991.

[2] See, David Altheide, *Creating Reality: How TV News Distorts Events* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1976); Edward Jay Epstein, *News From Nowhere* (New York: Vantage, 1974); Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News* (New York: Pantheon, 1979); Philip Schlesinger, *Putting "Reality" Together: BBC News* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1979); Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978).

[3] See, for example, Martin Herz, *The Prestige Press and the Christmas Bombing, 1972: Images and Reality in*

Vietnam (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980).

[4] John C. Merrill, in *Gannett Center Journal* (Fall 1990).

[5] *Vanderbilt Television News Index and Abstracts* (September 1968): 309.

[6] *Ibid.*:. 346.

Riot at the LBJ

Jack H. Crouchet, 408 Glencoe, Denver, CO 80220.

On the first day of September, 1968, during the noon recess of a court-martial in Long Binh, Colonel John Douglass approached and asked whether I would like to take a ride to observe the stockade remains.

"Stockade remains?" I asked incredulously. He answered in the affirmative and added he was surprised I had not heard about the riot on the preceding evening. I assumed that if there had been a riot, courts-martial might result and I'd be assigned to one or more cases, so I rejected his offer.

I had been in Vietnam only two months before the riot in Long Binh and it was purely by coincidence that I was there at the time it occurred. My assignment to Vietnam was made with very little notice and the hectic pace which followed had not diminished. I said farewell to my family in El Paso near Fort Bliss, Texas, on July 4 and was presiding over a general court-martial in Vietnam thirty hours later, before having an opportunity to obtain the required combat clothing or other essential gear.

A military judge's duties are similar to those of a federal district judge in criminal cases. He rules on all questions of law, keeps order in the court room, and instructs the court members with respect to their responsibilities. The most important functions of the members are to make findings of guilt or innocence and, in those cases where guilty findings have been made, to impose appropriate sentences. Since August 1969, an accused may waive the presence of court members but during the period I was in Vietnam, the military judge could not make findings of guilt or innocence or impose sentence. He was separated from the court members and not permitted to enter the deliberation process or communicate with them except in open court. Although I frequently had my own opinions with respect to the credibility of witnesses, the guilt or innocence of the accused, or the type of sentence to be imposed, those opinions remained my own.

Being a military judge had its advantages. I had orders with annual fund citations which allowed me to travel as necessary without prior approval from anyone. A judge was free from command influence because he was never assigned to local commanders who appointed the courts-martial. And happily I was, for the most part, treated with a certain respect, even by military officers who were superior to me in rank.

Being a judge in Vietnam, however, was somewhat more stressful than in the U.S. or elsewhere. There were three of us stationed in Saigon but assigned to act in thirteen different jurisdictions spread throughout the country, from the Demilitarized Zone to the Cau Mau Peninsula. We could not call for outside help. We worked every day, either in court, traveling, or authenticating cases in our office in Saigon. Frequently, because of pending cases in different jurisdiction the following day,

we were in court late at night, sometimes on the receiving end of mortar fire.

Travel was not a problem. We had access to airplanes, helicopters and wheeled vehicles. When in Saigon, we lived in comfortable air-conditioned quarters. In the field, where there were general's messes, we were usually invited to dine wit the staff. Where available, we were assigned to VIP quarters and had the opportunity to meet visiting dignitaries from the U.S. and frequently members of the press.

Makeshift buildings or tents with no facilities for deliberations or sidebar conferences were, more often than not, used as court rooms. In such cases, the court rooms were used for deliberations or legal discussions, while other parties to the trial retreated to nearby bunkers or other available shelter to await recall to the courtroom. Long Binh, however, was the exception. Inside the air-conditioned headquarters of United States Army Vietnam, there was a specially designed courtroom with all the facilities one would expect in the United States. It was in that courtroom Colonel Douglass approached me abut the riot and also the courtroom in which the cases which resulted from the riot were tried.

It was no shock that there had been a riot in the Long Binh Stockade (more commonly known as LBJ, or Long Binh Jail). Over seven hundred prisoners were crowded into a compound which had been built for (but couldn't even adequately house) five hundred inmates. The overcrowding was compounded by lack of creature comforts, harshness of discipline, and the summer heat. LBJ was a riot waiting to happen.

One person was killed, several were injured, and half the stockade burned in the riot. Twelve general courts-martial resulted. I was assigned to seven of the cases: one resulted in acquittal and six resulted in convictions with sentences ranging from two to ten years.

Much of the same evidence was introduced in each case, and it is fairly well summed up in the case of Private Richard Fallows. Fallows was charged with riot, manslaughter, and conspiracy to overthrow lawful authority. Captain Clinton Paul Pappas was the trial counsel, or prosecutor; Captain Nancy Fields was the defense counsel; and I was the military judge. After almost two days of testimony, the prosecution rested and the defense counsel asked for an out-of-court hearing, which I granted. The following ensued:

Judge: Defense Counsel, what is the purpose of this out-of-court hearing?

Defense Counsel (DC): Sir, the defense moves for a finding of not guilty. We have heard lots of evidence about a group of men carrying torches, swinging wooden bed posts normally used for supporting upper bunks, entering administrative areas of the stockade, releasing maximum security prisoners from the Big Max, assaulting guards and killing one prisoner. The only evidence against the accused, Private Fallows, however, is that two guards saw him in a crowd that was rioting, having a wooden bed post in his hand. There is absolutely nothing to show that he intended to use the bed post in an unlawful manner, or, for that matter, that he ever held it upright. There is no evidence to indicate that he railed against authority. I suggest there is nothing more than the fact that he was caught up in an event in which he was not involved. That's all, your honor.

Trial counsel (TC): Your honor, Fallows was indeed a part of the crowd that was raining destruction on the stockade. Consider this, there were numerous prisoners not participating in the disturbance and indeed, running away from those raising havoc with authority. Many prisoners had, in fact, assembled at the front gate showing their intent not to get involved in the riot. Private Fallows had a choice to make and he made the wrong one. There is indeed evidence to show that Fallows joined his friends, remained with the crowd and picked up a bed post, which is sufficient to proceed with the trial at this time.

Judge: The motion is denied. The case will proceed. This out of court hearing is terminated. Trial counsel, call the court.

TC: Yes sir.

[Trial Counsel enters the deliberation room for a moment and the court members, three officers and four enlisted persons, re-enter the court room.]

Judge: The court will come to order. Captain Fields, you may proceed with the case for the defense.

DC: Thank you, your honor. The defense waives an opening statement to the jury and calls the defendant, Private Fallows, as a witness.

[*Fallows approaches the trial counsel and raises his right hand to be sworn.*]

TC: Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Defendant (D): Yes, sir.

DC: Now, Private Fallows, try to relax. The court is interested in everything you have to say, so speak slowly and loudly as you can. First of all, you were a prisoner in the Long Binh stockade on the night of August 31st, 1968, is that correct?

D: Yes, ma'am.

DC: Please tell us just what happened that night.

D: Well, I was just laying on my bunk trying to sleep when my friend Paul and a few prisoners came to my tent with a bunch of rolled up papers burning at the end. Paul came in the tent and said that the brothers were going to get revenge against the chucks for all the shit we've been taking. I told Paul I didn't want to get involved in any of that mess. I had just gotten out of maximum confinement

in the Big Max, which was a living hell, and didn't want any more trouble. Well, there were eight white dudes sleeping in the tent with me and they all ran away and I was left alone and I didn't know what was going on so I went with Paul and a few of the other prisoners who were with him.

DC: Where did you go?

D: I did not know where we were going or what was going on. I was just afraid to be left alone, so I joined the brothers only to protect myself. I did not want any trouble. Well, when I got out of the tent, I could see a bunch of guards lined up with rifles about fifty yards away from us and I could hear sirens coming toward the stockade and I was real scared.

DC: Did you pick up a bed post?

D: Yes, ma'am, but I never wanted to use it. In fact, I never did use it. I just held it in case I needed to defend myself. For all I knew, maybe some Viet Cong were attacking the stockade. Everything was confusion.

DC: How did it all end?

D: Finally, a battalion of Military Policemen arrived to assist the guards, and then the fire trucks came. The stockade commander told all the prisoners near the gate to go outside and sit on the grass across the street. They left us brothers inside while the fire brigade was putting out the fires. When the fires were out, they locked us inside and we stayed there for two days. They threw C-rations over the fence and that's all we had to eat.

DC: Private Fallows, why were you in the stockade?

D: For selling grass, ma'am.

DC: How long had you been in the stockade?

D: Seven weeks, the last one in maximum confinement.

DC: Tell us about that.

TC: I object, your honor. Being in maximum confinement before the disturbance has nothing to do with this case.

DC: It does indeed, your honor. It bears upon the state of Private Fallows' mind. The conditions in the Big Max, as it was called, were enough to drive anyone to lose his ability to think rationally.

TC: I object again, your honor, defense counsel is testifying.

Judge: All right, Captain Fields, let the witness do the testifying, but I will overrule the prosecution's objection. You may continue with your examination.

DC: Thank you, your honor. Now, Private Fallows, tell us about maximum confinement.

D: Well, as you said, everybody called it the Big Max. There were these big conex containers, big steel boxes they used to ship things to Vietnam, and the stockade was using them for punishment. There is only one little hole in each side for light and air, and I guess it gets about one hundred and thirty degrees in there during the day time.

DC: Why were you in the Big Max?

D: For smoking grass.

DC: How were you treated while living in a big steel container?

D: Terrible, ma'am. There was no seasoning in our food. We only got out twice a day to go to the bathroom and exercise for half an hour. The guards, especially the chucks, were real nasty. I was in there for seven days.

DC: And how long were you out of Big Max on the night of the riot?

D: Just three days.

DC: Now, just once more, Private Fallows. Did you intend to hit anyone with that bed post, or join in a riot, or do anything to overthrow lawful authority in any way?

D: No, ma'am.

DC: Or did you do anything at all that was unlawful?

D: No, When Paul came to my bunk and everybody left, I was alone in the tent with him, and I was scared, so I just joined the group of his friends outside. I didn't know what was going to happen. I didn't plan anything.

DC: OK. Now, I'd like for you to tell the court something about your life. Where were you born?

D: Selma, Alabama.

DC: How long did you go to school?

D: About seven years, ma'am, but I never did finish anything.

DC: Are you married?

D: Yes, ma'am, and I have two kids.

DC: Does your family have any means of support other than your army allotment?

D: No, that's all they have.

DC: How long have you been in Vietnam?

D: Five months, ma'am. I spent two months of that time fighting the Viet Cong with the First Division.

DC: Do you know who the Viet Cong are?

D: Not exactly. All I know is they are communists and bad people.

DC: Do you know what a communist is?

D: No ma'am.

DC: Did you know where Vietnam was before you entered the army?

D: No ma'am.

DC: Do you know where it is now?

D: No, ma'am. I just know it's where I am now and far away from home.

DC: Speaking of home, did you ever have a job there?

D: Not exactly, I just did odds and ends. I swept floor and pumped gas, but that's about all.

DC: [*To the military judge*] Your honor, the defense and the prosecution will now offer a stipulation of fact as follows: Private Fallows volunteered for the army under the Project 100,000 program, which lowered the standards for entry into military service. Before that program was in effect, he could not have qualified for service because of his low IQ and his lack of education.

Judge: Private Fallows, do you understand the stipulation?

D: Yes, sir.

Judge: Very well. The stipulation is accepted and the court members may consider the facts stated therein as evidence in this case.

DC: Why did you volunteer for the army, Private Fallows?

D: Well, ma'am. I wasn't making any money to speak of in civilian life and my wife was never feeling well. She washed a few clothes for other people now and then, but her mother had to take care of the kids most of the time. We just couldn't live decent, so I volunteered for the army.

DC: Thank you, Private Fallows, that is all.

Judge: Trial counsel, do you wish to cross-examine?

TC: Yes, sir. Private Fallows, no one forced you to come into the army, is that right?

D: Yes, sir.

TC: You went through basic training, right?

D: Yes sir, but I was recycled, and it took a long time.

TC: But you did finish, and were sent to Vietnam, is that correct?

D: Yes, sir.

TC: What have you been doing since coming to Vietnam?

D: Like I said, I was in the field fighting the Viet Cong for two months, and the rest of the time, I just hung around.

TC: You just hung around. You also went to the village pretty often to buy grass for your buddies, is that right?

D: Just a couple of times.

TC: And you were court-martialled and sent to the stockade, is that right?

D: Yes, sir.

TC: And in the stockade, you did not behave very well. You smoked a lot of grass in there, did you not?

D: Everybody smoked grass. I smoked some.

TC: And it was only after the second time you were caught that you were sent to the Big Max, is that right?

D: Yes, sir.

TC: Now tell me, on the night of the riot, no one forced you to join that group burning buildings and assaulting guards, is that right?

D: No one forced me, but there was no place to go.

TC: Why didn't you run away with the white dudes in your tent?

D: It just wasn't the thing to do.

TC: Why didn't you run to the front gate where most of the prisoners, including some brothers, had gathered?

D: I can't say. I guess I thought we would eventually get there.

TC: Now you were in the group that entered the administrative building and the kitchen to set them on fire, is that right?

D: I never went into those buildings.

TC: But you stood outside watching.

D: Just watching.

TC: You were with the group that attacked and killed one of the prisoners, is that right?

D: I didn't see that. I didn't even see anyone get hit. They only told me later that someone was killed.

TC: Now, Private Fallows, there were at least two large groups of prisoners. Why did you stay with the group that was raising hell and making most of the noise?

D: It was just natural, sir. I didn't hit anybody. I didn't set anything on fire. I didn't let any of the prisoners out of the Big Max. I was just there.

TC: But you did pick up a wooden bed post. What were you going to do with that?

D: I don't know, sir. Everything was happening so fast.

TC: When your friend Paul came to your tent, he had a burning torch made out of rolled up newspapers, did he not.

D: Yes, sir.

TC: And there were a few brothers outside the tent waiting, is that not also right?

D: They weren't waiting. They were just there. I don't know what they were doing.

TC: Private Fallows, let me try to sum things up. Correct me if I make any mistakes. Your friend Paul came to your tent with a flaming torch and asked you to join him. Eight of your tent mates got scared and ran away, but you joined Paul's group, some of whom were yelling, "Kill the chucks!" You picked up a bed post. You watched while members of the group entered and set fire to the administrative building and the kitchen. You were in the group when someone killed another prisoner, although you say you did not see or know about this. Is all of this correct?

D: Yes, sir.

TC: Why didn't you leave the group?

D: Well, sir, them guards in the stockade were fuckin' with me for so long I figured there was nothing in the world I could do to save myself.

TC: Thank you. I have no further questions.

After arguments by the trial and defense counsel, I instructed the members of the court on the law of the case and their responsibility to make findings of guilt or innocence. I advised them that the accused's family background, his lack of education and all other matters which may have influenced his behavior must be considered. One of the requirements of the case was that the accused actually intended to override lawful authority. Did he have that specific intent? Did he have even the ability to form that specific intent?

Fallow's case was the fourth of the alleged rioters in which I participated. In my opinion, he was no worse, and probably less involved, than the others. Although technically he was guilty of some offense by remaining in the group which participated in the disturbances, I believe that he had not personally performed any of the acts of destruction or homicide which had occurred. But that was for the court to determine.

In less than an hour after I had given instructions, the court members returned to the courtroom and the president announced:

> Private Fallows, it is my duty as president of this court to inform you that the court, in closed session, by secret written ballot, two thirds of the members concurring, finds you: Of all specifications and charges: Guilty.

The defense then had an opportunity to present matters in extenuation and mitigation. Fallows testified in his own behalf, repeating substantially what he told the court before findings, adding a few details about the poverty of his family and the health of his children. He continued:

> I tried to join the army a long time ago but the recruiting sergeant said I was not qualified because I did not have an education. A year later, that same sergeant came to my house and told me that the rules had changed. He wanted me to enlist and promised me a lot of good things. I could even get an allotment of money for my family. So I joined the army and was sent to the infantry. Look where I am now!

The defense counsel offered the following statement in the accused's behalf:

> The system that allows a person as unqualified as Fallows to join the army and be sent to Vietnam is unjust. Moreover, there is an inherent inequity in placing men like Fallows closest to harm's way without an understanding of what other options are open to them.
>
> In his lifetime, Fallows did not have advice from any person who really cared about him or could have given him an opportunity to improve himself. Finally, I beg you to consider all of the unfortunate circumstances of the accused's life and to be lenient in your sentence. The army should bear some responsibility for recruiting young men who are totally unqualified to perform the tasks of a soldier.

I then had the responsibility of advising the court members with respect to the appropriateness of a sentence. I had already participated in three of the same riot cases which has resulted in sentences of dishonorable discharge, total forfeitures of pay and allowances and confinement at hard labor for two years in one case, three years in another and five years in the third. In all those cases, the accused had been seen, as a minimum, lifting bed posts and shouting epithets. Paul, the prisoner who had appeared at Fallow's tent and encouraged him and others to join the riot was considered to be the ringleader.

He had received a sentence including confinement at hard labor for ten years in a case tried by my fellow judge, Colonel Wayne Alley. I could not, of course, advise the court members of those other sentences or that, in my opinion, the accused was the least guilty of all the prisoners charged with crimes. One soldier yet to be tried had been seen actually throwing a fireball into the chapel, and another not yet tried had committed an assault which resulted in the death of another prisoner.

After advising the court of the maximum sentence which could be imposed in Fallow's case, and giving a few other standard instructions, the members retired to the deliberation room to consider punishment.

As the court departed, the defense counsel spoke a few words to the accused, then joined a few of the spectators in the rear of the courtroom smoking cigarettes. Fallows returned to the defense table seeming not to comprehend what had happened. From the bench, I looked at him, totally dejected and alone. I decided to approach Fallows, stepped down and joined him at the defense table. He did not seem to resent my intrusion on his presence but said nothing until I spoke.

"Private Fallows," I said, "whatever happens will probably not be pleasant, but I promise that I will try to help you. Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

"A couple," he answered, "but they're not much help."

"What about your father?"

"He lives in Detroit somewhere. I only saw him once or twice when he came to visit his relatives and dropped by to see my mama. He didn't talk much to me."

"Do you know if he ever gave money to your mother?"

"I don't know."

"Private Fallows, you don't have to answer this, and I really don't have any business asking, but just for my information, have you ever in your life been happy?"

"Not real happy. A couple of times my cousins came around when some people brought Thanksgiving stuff and we were laughing and horsing around. My wife and mama were feeling good, but it didn't happen often."

After a long, awkward silence, the members returned to the courtroom and we all resumed our proper places. Fallows reported to the president, who announced:

> Private Fallows, this court, voting by secret written ballot, two thirds of the members concurring, sentences you: To be dishonorably discharged from the service, to forfeit all pay and allowances and to be confined at hard labor for eight years.

Fallows was stunned. With gentle prodding, his counsel led him back to the defense table where both sat in absolute silence. After a pause he asked to speak to me.

What about money? What does forfeit mean?" he asked. "How will my family eat? Will they still get an allotment?"

I hesitated, but could only be honest.

"They will for a time," I answered, "but one day the money will stop."

He looked directly into my eyes, his lips quivering and tears rolling down his cheeks.

"Can your brother help you?" I asked.

"I don't think so," he mumbled. "He was in Vietnam a couple of years ago. He did all right and got a job after his discharge, but I never saw him. I think he went to meet our daddy in Detroit."

Neither of us could think of any other thing to say. There was nothing I could envision in Fallow's future I could offer to encourage him. He was going to jail, he was losing money and he would eventually be sent into the world with a punitive discharge.

The general who convened the court reduced the confinement at hard labor to five years but otherwise approved the findings and sentence. I knew from experience that in the long run the reduction to five years confinement would not be very meaningful, so I took an unusual approach in an attempt to help Fallows

For the first time since becoming a military judge, I wrote a letter to the Court of Review in Washington on behalf of a soldier in whose case I participated. I emphasized that Fallows entered the army as a Project 100,000 soldier, and, although many of the men recruited under that program made considerable contributions to the armed forces, Fallows was one who did not have the ability to do so. He could hardly read or write. Of the two hundred or so prisoners who participated in the riot, Fallows had the misfortune of being one of twelve recognized by guards who could identify him at trial. Most important, he never would have been involved if others had not encouraged him. The evidence in all the cases already tried indicated that some prisoners were planning the riot for at least three days and Fallows was never implicated in the plotting. Fallows had indeed used marijuana in the stockade, but so did at least fifty percent of the other prisoners. Serving more time in prison would be useless. Going into the world with a dishonorable discharge diminished all chances of his future success. I asked the Court of Review to seriously consider reducing the sentence.

Several months after leaving Vietnam and reporting to my new duty station in Munich, I received the appellate decision in Fallows' case. It was very short. The findings of the guilty were approved in their entirety. I was pleasantly surprised, however, to read that the Court of Review acknowledged receiving a letter from the military judge who participated in the appellant's case, recommending clemency. The court then reduced Fallows' confinement to that which had already been served and changed the Dishonorable to a Bad Conduct discharge.

Thus Fallows had returned into the world he had left, not better or wiser, but under more distressing circumstances than when he volunteered for the army almost three years before.

Journal of Firsts: Cuba, 1969

Penelope Wickersham. 82 Fairfield Ave., Lawrenceville, NJ 08648.

It took too long to get there. At times I doubted that we would ever arrive. First, the plane ride from Washington to Mexico City, where they herded us to one end of the airport, stretched a rope around us, and posted scowling men in suits to watch us. We had been told: dress very, very straight. The women said, Like, skirts and bras? The men said, Shave? Get a haircut? So, snipped and plucked, costumed in outdated clothes pulled from bedrooms that had frozen in time around 1965 when we still went to football games and dances, we sat stiffly in the airport and spoke in whispers and chain-smoked. I knew two people. The others could all have been agents. Some of the women looked too at ease in their dresses and pumps. Some of the men looked so uncomfortable in our midst that they too were suspect. I talked with Seth and Caroline but we didn't say much. He had kept his beard but trimmed it. She, like me, had applied make-up for the first time in years and got it all wrong. Too heavy for daytime, and she kept forgetting the mascara and rubbing her eyes so by afternoon she looked ghoulish.

Rumors: The Mexicans soon/would never let us on the Cuban plane, which we could see out the window. They wanted a pay-off. The FBI wanted one of us who was a fugitive. And who the hell was the guy with the military hair who paced along the rope and took pictures?

Our representatives were gone for hours. I imagined them enjoying a long spicy lunch on a sunny terrace. The Mexicans had plied them with tequila and they had talked too much. We were doomed. I wished I could take a walk outside to see what I could of Mexico. I'd never been there before. Never been outside the U.S. before. Seth told stories about living all over the world as a boy—Hong Kong, Oslo, London. No wonder he had such an air of quiet dignity and confidence. I was beginning to like him.

By the time they told us to gather our things and come along I had given up. It was past nightfall. The guards had changed shifts hours before. They led us down miles of empty corridors to a large windowless room. Oh well, I thought, we're all going to be shot and my parents will be so disappointed in me. Five at a time we were put up against a wall and photographed. To this day I have no idea who took those pictures or where they ended up.

The sense of wild unreality that had been kept at bay by anxiety burst through as soon as we were in the air. Svelte stewardesses in tailored blue served us rum and fruit. They didn't call us sir or miss, but *compañero y compañera*. Comrade. And some of the comrades drank too much. Crazy laughter and loud talk filled the cabin. Seth, who did not drink, told me what kind of plane we were in. A pretty old one. Shut up, I told him. I hated air travel. Seth, I decided, had the look of a guru in training—wise, deep-set eyes, a fall of thick dark hair; a full beard, virile despite its pruning. He was nineteen years old, a year younger than I. None of this is happening, I thought, not really.

Ours was the only plane arriving at José Martí Airport but the place was fully lighted and crowded with cheering people. There was a reception line of ecstatic Cubans who hugged and kissed us. A guitar trio played "Guantanamera." And more run. A harbinger of hospitalities to come.

We reached Campamento Averhoff around five in the morning. They told us to take a nap, but I couldn't sleep. The sun came up and all around our camp, in every direction, stretched an endless green expanse of ripe sugar cane with a canopy of sky unlike any I'd ever seen, so low and densely blue that it seemed tangible. I could image reaching up and grabbing a fistful as a souvenir. It would have been cool and moist, slipped easily into my knapsack, then thumped about like an unruly kitten. Way in the distance, a line of gentle blue mountains guarded the ends of the earth and the only sign of civilization was the sugar refinery, just a darker patch in the deep green, its one column of fiercely black smoke rushing upward like an exclamation point.

I would have been content to spend my free time sitting by the main gate and looking out. I'd spent lots of time watching the land when I was a kid. It was neither a lonely occupation or a passive one. It was an active protest against gardening. Why sweat over a few rows of temperamental plants when you could walk a mile and be surrounded by things that grew well without any help at all, often against tremendous obstacles. Of course, some made it and others did not, but at least it was a fair fight. I remember a tiny succulent thing that found the perfect spot to grow at the edge of a clearing in the woods. Every day I checked its progress, which was slow but steady. One morning after a night of rain, the spout had a new neighbor. A baby maple, looking so fragile with its narrow stem and oversized pale leaf, had popped up next door. Within two days it was good-bye sprout, and the maple had three leaves in a darker, more ominous green.

In Cuba everything grew with the willfulness of that baby maple. Sugar cane, which we learned to cut down, possesses the land in a way that corn and wheat could only dream of. It has a stalk hard as wood, thick as your arm, and impudent spiky leaves on its top. In a gust of wind the stalks clack against each other in a frenzied Morse code, eerie in the middle of the night when you can't sleep. In the early morning, as we trudged down the dirt road to our assigned patch, the cool air was thick with the west smell of stubborn green. I took this as a challenge, as if the cane was saying, come and get us, you middle-class *norte* parasites, come harvest us if you dare.

The Cubans told us: the men cut and the women pile. That meant the men squared off against a solid wall of cane and flayed away with machetes while the women followed behind and arranged the pieces into stacks, so many meters by so many, so the machine could pick them up efficiently. Well, I doubt that the attack on the Moncada Barracks caused more howling than that little announcement. The *norte* women had come to Cuba to *cut* cane, not *pile* it.... (Fill in your favorite obscenities.)

The Cubans told us, don't try it, it takes too much strength. Really, it didn't, but you had to master a few tricks. Fine-tuning the machete is essential and I never got the hang of it. Every morning the *jefe* of our brigade, Pedro, watched me grind away with the stone, then he motioned to me and I'd hand over my blade. I had little Spanish. Pedro mastered the curse words that the *norte* men taught him and no more. Unlike most of the Cubans in our camp he was not an academic type, but a real agricultural worker, a wiry graceful man with almond-shaped eyes and grooves down his cheeks where once, I imaged, when he was a fat happy baby, there were dimples.

Pedro taught us not to go for speed but to get a rhythm down or we'd exhaust ourselves. First cut: shoulder high, one chop; next, swipe off the top leaves to the side with one motion last, stoop down and chop parallel to the ground, as close as possible because the higher the stump, the weaker next year's plant.

We worked from seven until noon, took a two hour break, then back until five. Saturdays, half a day. There were *nortes* who carried on daily discourses about Marxism or democratic centralism or pacifism. Day after day their isms mixed with the sharp smack of machete against stalk. I couldn't talk or sing or even think as I worked. Just like when I was little and did unnatural things to my body in the name of classical ballet, I had to focus on the pain, keep count in my head, curse the enemy (a leg, a stalk), focus again.

The two hundred *nortes* and one hundred Cubans were divided into fifteen brigades. It was chic to be serious about work. After all, we had come to support the harvest of the ten million tons. The entire island was immersed in harvest fever. Murals by school children; office workers using a day off to cut; songs and slogans and rallies in the town squares of all the little towns. Not that we radical *nortes* believed we could materially affect the harvest. No, like most everything we did, it was symbolic—solidarity with the efforts of the Cuban people to build a better society, a repudiation of the embargo, etc. I went because I was so sick of people sneering at me, but you've never *been* to a socialist country, have you? Now I could say, yes, godamnit, yes I have!

The Cubans adored us despite our warts. And why not? We were their best PR gimmick since the Bay of Pigs. We were photographed, interviewed, honored and fêted. Everywhere we went there were crowds, beautiful little girls with bouquets, concerts, speeches about the enduring friendship between the people of Cuba and the people of the U.S. We couldn't stroll down a street in Havana to take a gander at the architecture. In an instant we were surrounded, embraced, congratulated, as if the very act of being there was heroic. It was exhausting. If I had a headache I still had to smile, smile, look at pictures of grandchildren, act interested in a hundred people at every half mile. It was the one time in my life that I felt a twinge of sympathy for celebrities.

We were there to cut cane for two months, then travel for several weeks around the island. During the work phase life in Campamento Averhoff took on all the qualities of life in any small town. There were good guys, bad guys, cliques, outcasts and leaders. There was an abundance of gossip and a moderate amount of sex. There were two fist fights and numerous incidents of petty theft (agents!). There was one pregnancy and one case of pylonephritis. And endless discussion of radical politics.

I tried to avoid all of the above except the gossip. Actually, a fist fight would have been exponentially more pleasant than the political talk. Every faction of the left was represented and they couldn't leave each other alone. That's what I meant about warts. God (or Whoever) only knows what the Cubans thought of us. For example, the Weatherman group had a ban on monogamy. If you were in a Weather collective you didn't dare form anything that smelled, however faintly, like a lasting love relationship. The Cubans found this puzzling. "How will they raise children?" Carlos asked me. He was a professor of economics, a portly man with gallant manners and thick glasses. "Children don't figure in their plans," I explained. "They're planning an armed struggle." "But," he protested, "why does one make a revolution, if not for one's children?"

I was a middle-of-the-road freelance malcontent. Ditto for my cutting partner, Elise, a solidly built, intense girl with hazel eyes and wavy auburn hair. The problem was Seth, for whom we shared a common admiration. He was secondary leadership in Weatherman, though Elise and I never figured out exactly what that meant. We had hope for him. While he never apologized for Weather excesses, he didn't defend them either. As the weeks went on, he emerged as an anti-Weatherman Weatherman. And he liked to spend a lot of time with us but never tried recruiting us via his sleeping bag, a time-honored tradition on the left and one which lived in Averhoff.

I started thinking that since I was doing so many things for the first time, maybe I'd add seduction to the list. Seth's gentle strength reminded me of the Quaker men I'd known as a child, men who'd probably cultivated an air of implacable confidence as a shield against bullies. Such men intrigued me. I liked to sneak up on them, tickle them, make them jump. Besides, Seth had the sexiest neck: smooth and strong, very kissable. At night, I'd lie in my bunk and imagine nipping that neck until he was crazy, marking it up good so his comrades would be sure to notice. Unfortunately, he didn't seem interested in me that way. Then again, he wasn't sleeping with anyone else. Elise confessed to me that she wanted him but was afraid. She'd had only one sexual experience and the guy had proclaimed her a washout. He was an idiot, I assured her. But I grew nervous. What if she confided in Seth, and he, in order to make her feel better... Of course, if he had been with Elise, it didn't mean I had to give him up. But I didn't want him that way. I was philosophically opposed to harems.

There was Jesse. My monog, as the Weather People called him. My man who was back in Philly and working every day. We said we loved each other. I had never cheated on him and I hadn't planned to start in Cuba. But just as it had seemed to me that we would never get there, after a certain point it seemed that we would never leave. The world now consisted of the clean sunny camp with its

khaki tents and gravel walkways and a backdrop of scenery so lovely that it had the too-perfect quality of paintings for sale at gas stations. I didn't miss Jesse, or anything except my B.B. King records. I told myself, feel guilty. But I couldn't.

The Cubans delighted in surprising us. One hot afternoon as we straggled into camp for lunch they called us over to the main tent where they had installed a large wooden contraption with a wringer on top. When fed raw cane and hand cranked it produced a murky drink called *guarapo*. It was sickeningly sweet, but the Cubans were so proud of the *guarapo* machine that it was impossible to admit we hated the stuff. It became the thing to do after work—crowd under the canopy with a cool metal cup in your hand and swap stories about the cutting experience.

There was *pica-pica*. A parasite with a cheerful green vine and droopy black pods, it introduced itself one foggy morning in a far-off patch of tangled skinny cane that grew in gravity-defying twists. We couldn't mark our rows. We couldn't tell which roots went with which tops. We sweated and cursed for hours to produce one puny pile, all except for Tim, a robust *norte* who was a football star in high school before he turned his energies to overthrowing the government. He had disappeared into the green mess hours before and could be heard whistling and chopping. Suddenly there was a screech and stream of curses and Tim came crashing down the path he had cut so well, his face ablaze, his eyes streaming. Ripping at his shirt, he set off across the stubbled field like he was about to score the winning TD in the Rose Bowl. Our *jefe*, Pedro, was sitting on the hood of the truck and studying his clipboard. I doubt that Pedro ever played football, but he should have. He executed a perfect flying tackle, held down the shrieking Tim, and whistled for the truck. Tim spent a day in the infirmary swathed in ointment and we were given a stern lecture on how to approach *pica-pica*. It never attacked me so maybe it sensed that I admired it. I wish I could have sketched it. Its vine, hard as wire, the quiet pods bulging with seedlets, waiting patiently for the right moment to burst out and take over the world. Even snobby sugar cane could be had, and by a mere weed. It was justice.

One Saturday night we were bussed to the opening of a new village named Ben Tre, after a Vietnamese village destroyed in the war. We toured the prefab pastel houses, the daycare center and clinic. We took supper and beer with the folks who were moving in. Seth, Elise and I danced together to the Afro-Salsa band. The air seemed suffused with optimism. When we got back to camp Seth and I took a long walk and talked about high school. He had had one girlfriend in his life, in London. She was the daughter of a government official. Very bright and pretty, so much so that people wondered what she saw in him. He was a disaster at sports. Not a mixer at parties. All he could do well was write papers on ancient history. That's always been me, he said, a brain without a body.

Nonsense, I snapped. We were standing near my tent. The camp was dark and quiet and the light breeze smelled of damp earth. I happen to like your body, I told him, at least as much as your brain. More.

He ducked his head and mumbled, I'm just, like, into going somewhere to lie down. I said, Fine. I couldn't believe I had said what I had. Maybe, like the entire trip, none of this was happening. In that case, I had no worries.

In my narrow bunk (and with Elise three feet away but asleep) we took off some of our clothes. It was chilly. I told him about my neck fantasies. He seemed pleased. Everything was sweet and easy. He had full, luscious lips and gentle hands. Just when I began to feel wickedly victorious, he sat up and turned away. In a strangled voice he said, I always freak out at this point. Why? I asked.

Basically, I can't get it together.

Ohhh, I said. I had heard of that. I stroked his back and told him it didn't matter. Hug me, I whispered. Relax. I tried to do things to him that Jesse had taught me, but he tensed up, so I stopped. Jesse, I thought, would have a good laugh over this if he knew. But he won't.

During our tour of the island, late one night in Santiago de Cuba, Seth did get it together. By then we had spent many nights in the same bed, cuddling and talking, sleeping with our limbs intertwined. I told him the story of Jesse and me. He told me that he was leaving Weatherman. At some point I realized that he had started saying 'we' and 'us.' I ignored it. I figured he meant until the trip was over.

He woke me up early one morning on the Isle of Youth and asked if I would come with him when we returned. I never did wake up easily. He grew agitated as I made him re-explain what he was talking about. For a few weeks, he said urgently, for a few days. We'll stay at my sister's place in DC. You'd like her.

It was true that I wasn't one hundred percent happy with Jesse, but the idea of going off to Cuba for three months and never returning astounded me. I couldn't do it. Seth let it go for the day, but it came up every so often. People wondered what was wrong with him, he was so moody. I stayed with him but I began to look forward to going home.

We sailed to St. John, Canada. I discovered that I hated sailing as much as flying. It was so rough that we were confined below deck for days. The ship pitched and careened so wildly that I held my breath and simply waited for it topple over. Seth held me and assured me that ships this size can't just tip over like canoes, and anyway, he wouldn't leave me no matter what happened. Since I became an atheist such situations were difficult. I was grateful to him.

On the bus down the East Coast, Seth said, Couldn't you call Jesse and tell him something? For a few days? I refused. Jesse was older and better traveled than I and I couldn't wait to lord over him all the sights I had seen.

At the station in Philly, I kissed Seth good-bye. He was slouched down inside his army jacket and did not meet my eyes. I never saw him again but years later, after my second child was born, I was seized by the urge to contact him. I remembered where his parents lived and wrote to every Wittenborn in the book until I found them. I wrote to him: Long ago, I did a cruel thing to you and the odd thing is that the farther from it I get in time, the

worse I feel about it. I was younger than I knew. I won't forget you.

He wrote back: Your letter affected me a great deal. I appreciate the emotion, the thought. You also did a very fine thing for me. Remember that. I won't forget you either. I hope your life goes well.

The harvest of the ten million tons weighed in at six. My hundred pounds was in there somewhere. I'd like to visit Cuba again but I can't bear the thought of being an ordinary tourist. Sure, there would be starched waiters with trays of rum, but they'd have phony smiles and outstretched hands. It wouldn't be the same. Then again, maybe I'd do more things for the first time if I went. By the way, the trip did my organizing work no good at all. People would pause, sneer again and say, yeah, they only let you see what they wanted you to see.

BACK TO THE PAST: IMPRESSIONS OF VIET NAM AND CUBA, 1994

Ann L. Kelsey, County College of Morris, Learning Resource Center, 214 Center Grove Rd., Randolph, NJ 07869.

INTRODUCTION

In October 1994, I had the opportunity to travel to Viet Nam in a very different capacity from my trips in 1969 and 1992. This time I returned as a member of a humanitarian group. Our purpose was to bring donated medical supplies and equipment to clinics in the southern part of the country. Representatives of Project: Hearts and Minds (PHAM), a grass-roots non-governmental organization (NGO) affiliated with Veterans for Peace, had contacted me initially in the fall of 1993. They had heard that I was sending books and journals to Viet Nam, and they had many donated medical journals. I was impressed with the group's mission, dedication, and with the fact that their membership was a heterogeneous mix of veterans, Vietnamese, pacifists, and people just interested in helping the Vietnamese people. PHAM was a symbol of reconciliation in microcosm. It brought together those who had fought in the Viet Nam War and those who had fought against it in a humanitarian effort focused on a nation whose name still means, for many, a war not a country. During the winter and spring of 1994, I became an active member of the New York area chapter of PHAM and my application to participate in the mission to Viet Nam in the fall of 1994 was accepted.

This was a unique opportunity for me. It was a chance to personally provide assistance and much needed medical supplies to the Vietnamese. It was an opportunity to see the effects of the lifting of the U.S. trade embargo on February 4, 1994. On my first trip back to Viet Nam in 1992, I was struck by how little Saigon had changed from the time I had spent there in 1969. I wondered if lifting the embargo would affect the time warp. Would Saigon still look the same? It was also a chance to compare current conditions in two of the communist countries still existing after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In August 1994 I had attended the conference of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) in Havana, Cuba. Cuba and Viet Nam were similar in that both had been subject to a U.S. trade embargo for many years. They differed because Viet Nam had endured the kind of destruction to land, property, and humanity brought on by years of war, while Cuba had suffered no armed conflict within its borders since the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961. I had been able to do some traveling outside Havana during my ten day visit, and my trip to Viet Nam would also include travel in the countryside. I had been able to do little of that in 1992 and even less in 1969. I wondered how these two countries, distinctly different culturally, but with similar climates, forms of current government, and comparable histories as European colonies, would compare.

Getting Ready

For the six of us selected to make the journey to Viet Nam, preparations were extensive and time-consuming. Each of us was responsible for collecting 140 pounds of medical supplies, filling two sixty-inch boxes. Continental Airlines had donated the airfare for six participants and twelve boxes of supplies. However, the cost of in-country travel, food, and hotels, and incidental charges such as visa fees, and airline taxes was underwritten by each participant. Part of the cost was subsidized from fund-raising activities undertaken both by the group as a whole and individually by the six persons making the journey.

The group, in its final composition, was an eclectic one composed of four women and two men. Three, myself and the men, had served in Viet Nam during the war. Of the remaining three women, one was a pediatrician specializing in international public health; one had taught English as a second language in China; and one, a British citizen who had lived through the Battle of Britain, had been active in the antiwar movement during the sixties. One man, a Swedish national, had come to the United States and enlisted in the Marine Corps to fight in Viet Nam. Although he had continued to retain his Swedish citizenship, he also carried a retired U.S. military ID card, the result of a 100% disability sustained when his unit was overrun outside Da Nang in 1968. The other man had served with a transportation company outside Saigon and in the Delta. I had been a civilian librarian with Army Special Services in Cam Ranh Bay.

While collecting the supplies and putting together the money for the trip was a daunting task, it was nothing compared to trying to leave. In 1992, when I went to Viet Nam as part of a faculty seminar sponsored by the Council for International Educational Exchange (CIEE), there were problems with obtaining visas, and there was some concern that we might never leave Bangkok. This scenario was repeated in 1994, as the departure date got closer and the visas were not forthcoming. We did not find out that we would have visas waiting for us at Tan Son Nhut Airport until less than twenty-four hours before our departure time. This was after three days of 3:00 a.m. phone calls, hundreds of pages of documents faxed in the middle of the night, and interminable consultations between the travel agency handling our travel in Viet Nam and PACCOM, the government office assigned to handle liaison services for NGOs. The twelve-hour time difference between New York and Saigon meant that all business had to be conducted between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. EST. Those of us faxing and phoning were zombie-like by the time the issues surrounding the entry of ourselves and the medical supplies were resolved.

At one point, numerous local arrangements, including car services to the airport, the hotel reservation for an overnight layover in Guam, and medical evacuation insurance policies had been canceled and had to be reinstated only hours before departure. But all of the anxiety and sleeplessness was forgotten as the six of us gathered, our twelve, seventy pound boxes in tow, at Newark Airport at 6:30 a.m. on October 14. We were on our way!.

Arrival

For two of us, this was not our first trip to Viet Nam, nor was it our first trip since the war. I could empathize, however, with the others' apprehension as our succession of flights brought us closer to our destination. For me there was a feeling of deja vu that I had not had when I had returned to Viet Nam in 1992. Then I had flown from Newark to Taipei to Bangkok, spending a week touring in Thailand before going to Viet Nam. But this time our route, San Francisco-Hawaii- Guam-Manila-Saigon, retraced almost exactly my 1969 trip on a chartered Braniff jet loaded with soldiers on their way to war.

I remembered the journey from Travis Air Force Base outside San Francisco to Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam to Clark Air Base in Manila and finally to Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. What a difference 25 years had made. Instead of being practically the only woman on a plane filled with men in uniform, my fellow travelers were dressed in business suits and jeans. Instead of a military charter we traveled on Continental jumbo jets and an Airbus flying under contract to Viet Nam Airlines. The Continental pilot on the flight from Guam to Manila sent a newspaper clipping back for us to read. It was about bringing his daughter, an Amerasian, from Saigon to live with him and his family in the United States. A Viet Nam veteran, he wished us well on our journey, pleased that he had flown us part of the way. On the Air Viet Nam flight from Manila, the Vietnamese flight attendants were smartly dressed in pink ao dais or slacks and jackets. The pilot was French.

As we landed at Tan Son Nhut International Airport, lightning crackled through the sky, immense black thunderheads turned day into night. By the time we got off the plane and climbed into the bus to take us to the terminal, sheets of rain were pelting down. One of our group had hoped to see the monsoons that she had heard so much about. She got her wish, and this was only the beginning. For me that storm was a throwback to 1969, for lightning and sheeting rain, to this day, remind me of that year. Tan Son Nhut had changed a great deal since 1992 and was unrecognizable from 1969. It was so quiet. The hustle and bustle, the scores of C-130s, helicopters, and airliners were gone. I could see the remains of some hangers and revetments, built to protect the military planes from rocket and mortar attacks, but it was a totally different place. The arrivals area was also different. The open air quonset huts were gone, as were the warehouse like areas. There were no extended families living in the arrival and departure areas.

The changes since 1992 were striking also. The arrivals area had undergone extensive renovations. Walls and flooring had been replaced and several mechanical baggage carousels installed. There were many carts available for us to load our boxes of medical supplies onto. I thought of the arrival shed at Jose Marti Airport in Havana, and how much it had reminded me of Tan Son Nhut in 1969—a wall of dense tropical heat, a sweltering

immigration line in a darkened hanger-like building, hundreds of people milling around trying to collect baggage. Could the economic consequences of lifting the embargo be such as to make such changes possible so quickly?

Our visas were indeed waiting for us, and immigration processing was quick and efficient, much different from 1992 and from Cuba just a few months before. The customs agents, while still bureaucratic, were approachable and courteous. Our boxes were taken for "processing" which would take two days. We had been told during the faxing frenzy just before our departure that this would happen, so we were not surprised. After some discussion and negotiation, receipts were provided for the twelve boxes being retained by Customs. As we left the customs area and went outdoors, I was amazed to see a Vietnamese friend I had met in 1992 hanging on the fence at the exit. She had been waiting since 6:00 a.m. because she did not know for sure what flight I was arriving on. That meant she had waited almost 12 hours to meet me. I was so glad to see her and to discover that she lived near my hotel. She came to visit several times, bringing her baby for me to meet.

The Road to Tay Ninh

The next day one of our group volunteered to go to the Customs Office with representatives of the agency handling our in-country travel to keep tabs on our boxes. The rest of us decided to go to Tay Ninh and Cu Chi. This day tour would incur an extra charge, but one Viet Nam veteran had run convoys between Long Binh and Tay Ninh during the war. This was an opportunity for him to go back to some of those places. For everyone else, it was a chance to see some countryside, and the temple in Tay Ninh, which was the center of the Cao Dai religious sect.

As we drove toward Tay Ninh, I was struck by the number of small shops along the road. There were many more houses and huts than there were two years ago, and each house had a little business set up in front of it. Some sold gasoline in liter bottles, some were cafes, some looked like the Vietnamese equivalent of a convenience store. The road was almost unrecognizable to the veteran who had traveled it during the war. It was paved instead of dirt. The area between the road and the tree line, once cleared and desolate, was now covered with rice paddies, farm houses, and villages. Only Nui Ba Den, the Black Virgin Mountain, towering impressively over the surrounding flat lands, still looked the same.

We arrived at the Cao Dai temple in time for the noon religious ceremony. The ritual, observed daily at 6:00 a.m., noon, 6:00 p.m., and midnight, began with the entry of men and women from opposite sides of the temple, men from the right, women from the left. The worshipers were dressed in white. Priests and other dignitaries wore elaborate, colorful ceremonial dresses and hats in red, blue, and yellow. The most important disciples and priests were gathered at the front of the congregation closest to the altar. Above the alter was suspended the divine eye, the religion's official symbol. Visitors were allowed to view and photograph the ceremony from the balconies which lined both sides of the temple above the main floor. Just as it was in 1992, the ceremony was colorful and impressive.

Heading back toward Cu Chi we stopped in Trang Bang. Trang Bang is "famous" for the photograph that appeared on the cover of the *New York Times* (June 9, 1972, 1:1) of the young girl running naked down the road after a napalm strike.

We had lunch in a local cafe, maintaining a delicate balance between not offending the cooks while simultaneously avoiding the plethora of raw vegetables and other uncooked delicacies placed before us. I thought of my recent visit to Cuba where food stalls and small restaurants were virtually nonexistent, except those created by the state for tourist use, and where food in any context was scant and scarce.

After lunch, we decided to visit the market. We were immediately surrounded by friendly, curious shoppers and sellers, surprised and delighted by our presence. As always, everyone wanted to practice their English. As always, I was embarrassed by the fact that none of us knew enough Vietnamese to even attempt to practice.

When they found out that one of us had been in Trang Bang during the war, there was much talking and smiling. Two women said that as children, they sold Coca-Cola to the American soldiers in the convoys that passed through their village. "Maybe you sold me one," said Jim. Everyone laughed, and someone snapped a picture of the former Coca-Cola sellers and the former GI sitting and laughing together in the Trang Bang market in a town where napalm once rained down.

The Cu Chi Tunnels

After leaving Trang Bang, we retraced our route to Cu Chi village, turning off there to visit the famous tunnels. For most of the years of the American War, these Viet Cong (VC) subterranean living areas and war rooms twisted and turned below the ground directly underneath the headquarters of the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division. I had not been to Cu Chi during the war, but in 1992, after our visit there, I wrote this in my journal: "The Cu Chi tunnels have turned into a tourist attraction, complete with T-shirts, beer and soda, and video presentations. A Vietnamese veteran with an amputated arm did the presentation. It doesn't seem right somehow that this place where so many people died, on both sides, should be a mini-Disneyland with carefully crafted tunnels for the tourists to go into. I couldn't bring myself to go into the tunnels. Turning this battlefield into a semi-amusement park really bothered me. Somebody asked me if I felt that way about Gettysburg, and I guess I don't, but Gettysburg doesn't have the immediacy of Cu Chi."

In 1994, the transformation of the Cu Chi tunnels into an amusement park was virtually complete. The tunnels, already widened to fit western bodies in 1992, now had canopies over the entrances and exits. In one tunnel, cassava and tea were served as snacks by a woman, allegedly a former VC, who had lived and fought there during the war. The one souvenir stand had blossomed into a whole arcade, selling everything from Coke

to war souvenirs to the Vietnamese version of Tiger Balm, an ointment manufactured in Hong Kong for treatment of everything from insect bites to lumbago.

The video was now available in multiple languages. The content seemed different, however. While the video in 1992 was mostly in Vietnamese and consisted of grainy newsreel footage, the 1994 video was in the language of your choice and while the grainy newsreel quality was retained, the content seemed very staged— too many revolutionaries hunkered down in the jungle, weapon in hand, looking up to smile at the camera, while their achievements as killers of Americans were detailed.

The piece de resistance was the firing range, where visitors could fire at targets with replicas of AK-47 rifles. Perhaps it is poetic justice that the Vietnamese have made Cu Chi into what it is today. The irony of it is unescapable. Nevertheless, visiting it was very uncomfortable for some of us who were there during the war, and it is not a place to which I wish to return.

After our visit to Cu Chi, we returned to Saigon, still jet lagged and too exhausted to do much except eat a little dinner at the hotel restaurant and go to sleep. The next day we checked the progress being made in retrieving our boxes from Customs. The group member working with the Customs people had spent the day at the Customs office the day before and was going back to the airport to collect the boxes that morning. It seemed as if everything would be ready for our first delivery to the Friendship Clinic in Vung Tau the next day.

Libraries

While the box retrieval process continued, two of us attempted to make contact with people at the University of Ho Chi Minh City, while others went on a walking tour of Saigon with the guide from the tour agency. I was unsuccessful in meeting with the Director of the Library School at the University, but left my card and the name of my hotel with one of the library school students, hoping that a meeting could be arranged before I left Viet Nam. I had met the library school director, in 1992. Since then, she and I had corresponded, and I had shipped several boxes of books to her, mostly library science texts and medical books and journals.

The libraries in Viet Nam, like all other parts of its infrastructure, are in a state of debilitation and decay. In 1992, when I visited the library at Ho Chi Minh City University I was appalled by the moldy wood shelves packed with mildewed disintegrating books. Many books were tied with baling wire and thrown in heaps. It was dark and dank. The reference shelf had a decaying Grolier encyclopedia from the mid- 1960s, a 1985 Britannica they said was a gift, and a few other titles, maybe 100 total including the multivolume encyclopedias. There was no computerization. In 1994 I noticed few changes.

The national library in Cuba, named for Jose Marti, and the library at the University of Havana, on the other hand, had been very different. There the climate control was haphazard, rather than nonexistent. The metal shelves were not yet covered in rust. The materials were still in reasonably good condition and only five years out of date, not twenty-five. The deterioration and destruction that characterized the collections in the Vietnamese libraries had not yet taken hold. Interestingly, despite the close relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union, Cuban libraries did not adopt the Soviet classification system as did the Vietnamese. Instead the Cubans used the very American Dewey Decimal system and Library of Congress Subject Headings. High on their wish list was a set of the Library of Congress Subject Heading volumes in Spanish.

Unlike the library at the University of Ho Chi Minh City, the University of Havana library had begun to computerize using a Novell local area network and software developed locally for entering catalog information for titles in the collection and for specialized data bases. The local area network in the library connected with university and student user groups in and around Havana, and provided Internet access. Interlibrary loan among the institutions was done through telex and electronic mail. Unlike Viet Nam, Cuba also had a well developed network of public and K-12 school libraries.

The differences between the libraries in Viet Nam and Cuba symbolized for me important contrasts between the two countries. Viet Nam's infrastructure was destroyed by war and its inability to obtain loans from development agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and to obtain hard currency to purchase goods and services made it difficult to repair and update that infrastructure.

Cuba, on the other hand, retained the infrastructure that it built while Viet Nam's was being destroyed, but its current lack of access to hard currency and economic development funds is resulting in an erosion of that infrastructure. The downward spiral has begun, and it will be only a matter of time before Cuba falls victim to the same decay and disintegration that has afflicted Viet Nam.

Vung Tau and the Friendship Clinic

Wednesday, our boxes retrieved from Customs, we set off to the Friendship Clinic in Vung Tau to make our first delivery. This clinic, built in 1989, was the first constructed by the Viet Nam Veterans Restoration Project. Our trip to Vung Tau took us over a route familiar to the two of us who had spent time in the Saigon area during the war. We crossed over the Saigon River near the site of Newport, one of the largest ports in the III Corps Military Zone. We then traveled along the road that had led from Saigon to the headquarters of the US Army Viet Nam (USARV) in Long Binh.

On the way we visited a cemetery honoring soldiers who had fought with the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the Viet Cong. The cemetery had several large statues and a reception area. A lone woman methodically scrubbed the stones that made up the wide walkway, almost a thoroughfare, that led from the reception area to the grave sites. The graves were arranged in groups of eight, a lucky number for the Vietnamese. It was suggested to us that many of the graves were empty. Nearby

was an ARVN cemetery. Although we could not get very close to it, as it was surrounded by a military installation, it seemed in much worse repair than the NLF one. One might assume from this that the graveyards of the winners are well tended, while those of the losers are not. This does not explain, however, what I observed at an NLF cemetery not far from the Cu Chi tunnels. In 1992, this cemetery was well taken care of. But in 1994 it was overgrown, the graves starting to show signs of neglect and indifference. Why? No one seemed to know.

After leaving the NLF cemetery we drove toward Vung Tau, passing through Long Binh village, near what had been the site of the sprawling USARV headquarters. Nothing was left of that American-made city. It seemed to have disappeared without a trace, as if it had never existed. It was difficult to identify locations and landmarks remembered from twenty-five years ago. Places like Bear Cat, Di An, and the site of the Australian Field Force headquarters in the hills, seemed vaguely familiar but impossible to really identify. It didn't look the same.

We arrived at the Friendship Clinic and met with a group of administrators and medical personnel. Only a few obstetrics patients were being treated on the day we were there. The boxes of supplies being donated to the clinic were opened and gratefully acknowledged. In 1992 when attending similar meetings with university faculty, hot tea was always served. This time something new had been added—potable water in sealed plastic bottles. The label said 333. Now the 333 brewery was also in the bottled water business.

After leaving the clinic, we drove through Vung Tau, which seemed depressed. The beaches we saw were forlorn, much of their beauty and lustre lost. I was reminded of a conversation I had had with a couple in the Bong Sen Hotel in Saigon in 1992. He had been stationed in Vung Tau during the war, and his wife, a Vietnamese, had lived there. They had just returned for the first time and were very upset at how sad and rundown it was.

We ate lunch at a seaside restaurant just below one of the landmarks that those who spent time in Vung Tau are likely to remember—the giant Jesus which gazes with outstretched arms across the South China Sea. The huge statue was surrounded by scaffolding, apparently under repair.

As we drove back to Saigon, it began to rain. Little did we know that this was the beginning of a monsoon/typhoon downpour that would follow us from Saigon to Da Nang eventually stranding us as we attempted to reach our next scheduled stop, the hospital in My Lai.

The Pancake House

That night, despite the pouring rain, three of us decided to venture out to a restaurant recommended by our guide. "There's no sign," he said. "Walk down Hai Ba Trung to the church. Turn left and look for the women cooking on the sidewalk. It's a pancake house." We walked down Hai Ba Trung and after a couple of wrong turns, stumbled on the pancake house, where indeed dozens of women were on the sidewalk cooking delicious pancakes, resembling, but far superior to, the moo shu pork available in your local Chinese restaurant. The pancake house was a thriving, popular local restaurant. The dining room was an alleyway behind the sidewalk kitchen. Most (but not all) of the long picnic style tables were covered by canopies, which helped to keep the rain off. Huge plastic basins on one side of the alley filled with water from a nearby hose served as dishwashers. We let none of this deter us as we pulled out our chopsticks (taken from the cafeteria at the Guam airport), wiped off our beer bottles, and ate everything placed in front of us—as long as it was cooked within an inch of its life.

What a contrast this thriving sidewalk eatery in Saigon was to what I had experienced in Cuba. In Cuba there were no sidewalk restaurants, no food stands. The markets in Trang Bang and Cholon, overflowing with rice, meat, and vegetables were a sharp contrast to the closed and empty buildings I saw in Havana with signs saying Supermercado. When a food store did open, long lines formed. Only the dollar stores, the markets and restaurants that catered to tourists and accepted dollars not pesos, had stocked shelves and food to serve. Why the difference?

The Cubans seemed to rely much more heavily on imported food. The collapse of their main source of imports, the Soviet Union, combined with the U.S. trade embargo, had slowed to a trickle the supplies of food needed to feed the island's population. The Vietnamese, on the other hand, utilized every piece of cultivatable land to grow food. Rice paddies were everywhere. The Vietnamese economy no doubt had also been strained by the demise of the Soviet Union, but food shortages had not occurred, perhaps because Viet Nam's dependence on outside sources for food was not as great as Cuba's.

The Typhoon

The next morning we were up before dawn to get ourselves and our boxes onto the 7:30 a.m. flight to Da Nang. We arrived at the Tan Son Nhut domestic air terminal, checked in ourselves and our boxes and paid the excess baggage charge. Then we waited. It was bright and sunny in Saigon, but in Da Nang it apparently was not. The flight was called and cancelled, called and cancelled again. We wandered into the airport restaurant and ordered pho ga (chicken soup). The flight was called again, and this time it wasn't cancelled. A whole room of travelers left steaming bowls of soup on the tables and rushed to line up for the bus that would take them to the plane, a new Air Viet Nam aircraft of neither Russian nor Chinese extraction, piloted by a Frenchman.

We arrived in Da Nang under soggy, gray skies. After retrieving our boxes, we moved through baggage control and spotted our guide, Mr. Hoi, and the two Hue Tourist vans assigned to us. We divided ourselves and our boxes between the two vans just as the rain began to fall again. As we drove outside the airport, huge billboards advertised the desirability of Da Nang as a site of commerce and trade. Still visible were remnants of the American presence, large revetments and hangers used to shelter planes from attack. We stopped briefly at Peace Village, the clinic established by Le Ly Hayslip's East Meets West

Foundation. It was raining harder. Our itinerary called for us to drive to My Lai, where we would spend the night. The hospital staff had planned a banquet for us that evening and the next day we would deliver the boxes of medical supplies.

As we flew into Da Nang, we had noticed the flooding below us. Not only were the fields and rice paddies flooded, but also many rivers, ponds, and roads. There had been severe flooding in the Mekong Delta, and we had seen the seriousness of that situation as we flew over the flooded landscape on our journey to Saigon from Manila. We asked Mr. Hoi if this amount of flooding was normal, and he answered that it was not, that this year it was much worse.

As we drove along Highway 1 the road became awash in water. Sheets of rain and water washed over the van. The bottom halves of the telephone poles running alongside the road were completely submerged. The wind and rain pummeled the local residents trying to hold themselves, their bikes, and their motor scooters upright against the deluge. Water was flowing into many of the houses in the roadside villages that we passed. Highway 1 itself was becoming more flooded making it increasingly difficult for the van to continue. The driver was concerned that water might reach the engine and wash it out. Finally, at Tam Ky we were told that the road ahead was washed out and we couldn't continue. Going back to Da Nang didn't seem to be an option either. It seemed that we would be spending the night in Tam Ky.

The Tam Ky "Hilton"

Tam Ky was described in the Lonely Planet guidebook as a nondescript town between Da Nang and Quang Ngai. The Tam Ky Hotel (Khach San Tam Ky) was mentioned as a decent place in the center of town and the only hotel that accepted foreigners. As luck would have it, that is precisely where we were forced to stop, as the hotel was located on the bank of a river that was overflowing its banks and washing out the road. And so began our overnight adventure at the Tam Ky "Hilton".

The hotel's attached garage seemed to do double duty as a cafe. The guide insisted that both the vans be garaged, so tables and chairs were moved and rearranged to accommodate that need. The hood of one van rested comfortably on the bar. The word traveled quickly traveled that six Americans had stopped to spend the night. Almost immediately dozens of kids appeared at the garage door, some anxious to practice their English, others just anxious to look.

Those members of the group lacking rain ponchos quickly waded across the road to purchase them. Cameras were pulled out to photograph the roaring river rushing past our doorstep. One kid elected himself our mentor and guide, following us to our rooms and helping us to find the mosquito netting and hang it over our beds. He was fifteen and looked ten. The hotel's electricity had been cut off by the storm, so flashlights were popular accessories for negotiating the stairs, wading through the standing water in the corridor, and locating the communal bathroom at the end of the hall.

In Cam Ranh Bay in 1969, there were no bathroom facilities for women except in their living quarters. After a few days of utilizing the space behind a conex (a large metal storage container) outside the library as a restroom, a solution to the problem presented itself in the form of a chamber pot disguised as a coffee can. A chamber pot seemed just the thing for the Tam Ky "Hilton", since midnight trips in the dark to a communal bathroom had little appeal.

During a break in the storm, our young guide led us down the street to the Tam Ky market. We had been successful in communicating what we were looking for by pointing to the plastic wash basins in the room and using English words that he knew. The town market is the Vietnamese equivalent to the mall. The market is divided into sections of stalls specializing in different goods—food, clothing, appliances, and of course, housewares. He led us directly to housewares to a stall filled with plastic pots and basins of every imaginable size and color. These pots are very important, serving as sinks, bathtubs, and storage containers. We selected an appropriate chamber pot and wash basin, heading back to the hotel as the rain began to fall again.

The hotel staff offered to cook dinner for us and asked what we would like. Soup, boiling hot, and rice were the popular choices. They must have wondered at our culinary tastes, but prepared a fine meal to our specifications.

Our young friend returned with his sister after dinner to visit with us some more. They explained that they went to school at night to learn English. It was embarrassing that almost everyone in Viet Nam seemed to be learning English, while none of us knew even rudimentary Vietnamese.

At one point the power returned. This was not necessarily a benefit because the increased light allowed us to see the super-sized cockroaches sharing the rooms with us. The next morning, after a fitful night's sleep, I was *very* glad that I had my chamber pot as another group member described the roach occupying the toilet he had approached during the night. One look had convinced him to simply move to the next stall.

Paradoxically, the unplanned overnight in Tam Ky was one of the highlights of trip for me. What was lacking in creature comforts was more than made up for by the opportunity to meet and talk with the hotel staff, the dids the shopowners on the street and in the market. I'm glad we got stranded there.

The water had receded enough to allow travel to resume along Highway 1. We loaded ourselves in the vans and set off again for My Lai. We stopped at a roadside cafe in a village a small distance from Tam Ky for breakfast. The more adventurous eaters had a full meal of whatever was available. The less adventurous ate bread and tea. Soon we were passing through Chu Lai. The site of the huge base, first Marine Corps, later Army, was open ground. Little evidence of its existence remained. The shanty town that had grown up outside the gates had disappeared. Just outside Chu Lai we were forced to stop again. The water was rising over the road, and the drivers did not think the vans could pass through.

The My Lai Hospital and the Phu Loc Clinic

We were determined to reach the hospital. Mr Hoi, the guide, suggested that we return to Chu Lai and rent a local bus. These buses, which travel between towns and cities all over the country, are fifty-plus years old French Renaults held together by wire, spit, and Vietnamese ingenuity. The bus we chose, or more likely the bus whose driver was willing to deal with us, had no starter switch. He just stuck two wires together to spark the ignition. The seats were rusty metal, the floor consisted of wood planks with plenty of space between each plank for a nice view of the road below. But the bus was high off the ground and very nicely forded the flooded road without washing out its engine. It was exciting to watch the water rushing under our feet through the gaps in the floor planks. Soon after, to everyone's relief, we pulled into the driveway of the My Lai Hospital. Dr. Ky, the director, met us along with a delegation of other hospital personnel. We toured the hospital, which had few patients at the time we were there, and delivered our boxes.

Because of the bad weather, we did not visit the Son My monument and museum at the site of the My Lai massacre. We did, however, enjoy lunch with the hospital staff, the guides, the drivers (including our erstwhile bus driver, a former ARVN (South Vietnamese Army) soldier), and representatives from the local people's committee. The beer and the camaraderie flowed in equal amounts. Interestingly, few of the Vietnamese admitted to being veterans. The hospital personnel said no they were not veterans. They were in the medical corps.

The trip back to Da Nang was much less eventful than the previous day's adventure. Halfway between My Lai and Chu Lai we met our vans. The water had receded enough for them to continue south on Highway 1. We bid our bus driver and his Renault a fond farewell and returned to our far less interesting Hue Tourist vans. There was still a substantial amount of flooding and many people were getting to and from their houses by boat. Still everyone seemed to take the situation in stride. Later we learned that the main force of the typhoon had struck the Philippines, causing major flooding. Manila was without power for over a day.

Just outside Da Nang, we stopped briefly at the souvenir stands in a small village, Non Nuoc Hamlet perhaps, near the Marble Mountains. These small stores sold a plethora of statues, boxes, and jewelry made of, what else, marble. The weather and the delays encountered in getting to My Lai left no time for visiting Hoi An or China Beach, but we did squeeze in a stop at the Cham Museum in Da Nang. Founded in 1915 by the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient, it has the finest collection of Cham sculpture in the world. The Champa civilization flourished in southern Viet Nam between the 7th and 15th centuries before they were conquered and assimilated by the Dai Viet or ethnic Vietnamese. My Son, one of the most important Cham archaeological sites in Viet Nam, is located just outside Da Nang. Unfortunately, it was used by the Viet Cong as a staging area and as a result many structures and monuments were destroyed or damaged. The hills and valleys around My Son were heavily mined and live ordnance still explodes there, killing and injuring hapless humans and animals. The clinics and hospitals must still contend with fresh war wounds twenty years after the end of the war.

The next day we set out from Da Nang, heading north toward Hue over the Hai Van Pass. The Hai Van Pass in the 15th century formed the boundary between Viet Nam and the Kingdom of Champa. It crosses over a spur of the Truong Son Mountain Range and is one of those spots in Viet Nam where the mountains actually touch the sea. Before the Viet Nam War it was heavily forested, and some of that growth has now returned. The sun shone, and the views of the sea, the beaches, and the mountains were spectacular. At the top of the pass was an old French fort used by both the Americans and the South Vietnamese during the war. The guidebook warned that live mortar shells were still strewn in the undergrowth. Vendors aggressively marketed their wares at the bus stop just across the road from the fort. Chewing gum, bottled water, film, food all were offered for sale and no one took "no" for an answer.

As we descended the other side of the mountain, a breathtaking view appeared before us. The lagoon on one side of the Lang Co peninsula below was filled with fishing boats. The guide said this was unusual for this time of day and attributed it to the fact that the typhoon had thrown up a number of fish. On the other side of the peninsula, waves from the South China Sea lapped languidly up onto the brilliantly white sand beaches. Phu Loc, the hamlet located on the Lang Co peninsula, was the site of the next clinic for which we had brought supplies. We had seen pictures of the Phu Loc clinic taken by participants in PHAM's October 1993 trip, showing buildings and equipment in very poor condition. But there had been improvements in the past year. Funding had been secured from an Italian NGO to refurbish the clinic, and the work was in progress. Walls and floors were tiled and painted, windows and doors were being installed.

Most of the village, men, women, and children, seemed clustered around the meeting room where the supplies were distributed. The doctors at Phu Loc worked with the doctor in our group to put together a list of supplies and equipment that would be most useful to them. An ambulance was high on their list. Phu Loc's location at the foot of the Hai Van Pass meant that it was the first stop for those injured in the many vehicle accidents that occurred on the steep and twisting mountain road. Most often, these cases had to be transported to the hospital in Hue, but the village had no appropriate vehicle to transport the injured.

A one-armed Vietnamese veteran chatted with the veterans in our group. He had never fought the Americans, and we were the first Americans he had met. A Viet Minh, he had fought the French and the South Vietnamese. He lost his arm in the early 1960s and was sent north to Hanoi. In 1975, when the war ended, he returned to Phu Loc, the village of his birth. Now, in 1994, wearing one American's gift of a Viet Nam Veterans Against the War pin, he posed for pictures, smiling and shaking hands with the two American veterans, enemies no more.

After lunch, we continued north toward Hue. As we drove off the picture postcard that was Lang Co, I read its description in the guidebook: "...one of the most tranquil places in all Viet Nam." During the war, this area between Da Nang and Hue was the scene of intermittent fighting. Lang Co/Phu Loc was one of the first villages targeted during Tet 1968. A friend's company had been overrun here in the summer of 1968, just after his departure.

I thought about the war that had been fought up and down this peaceful, beautiful coastline, in these rice fields and villages—Chu Lai, My Lai, the Que Son Valley, Da Nang, Ashau, Hue, Phu Bai, and hundreds of fire bases and landing zones gone now, still existing only in the memories of those who fought there. It seemed unreal, as if two different worlds, the one that was and the one that is, were converging and occupying the same space.

On to Hue

Driving through the countryside, I compared what I saw with what I had seen driving through the villages and rural areas in Cuba. Cuba has a viable infrastructure: roads, electrical and telephone lines criss-cross the island. Viet Nam's infrastructure has not even remotely recovered from the destruction caused by years of warfare. Yet Viet Nam's substandard roads are filled with traffic. Carts, bicycles, cyclos, motorscooters, trucks, and cars clog one and two lane roads and highways. Cuba's two and four lane highways are virtually empty due to fuel shortages.

These same shortages prevent the Cubans from getting their crops of sugar cane and tobacco from the fields to the ports for export. In 1992, when the embargo was still in effect, Viet Nam had far fewer cars and trucks, but crops and people still moved, albeit more slowly, on carts, scooters, and bicycles. The Cubans have still not adjusted to and maximized their use of non-motorized forms of transport as the Chinese and Vietnamese have.

Electrical power is erratic in both countries. Lack of fuel seems to be the main problem in Cuba, while the lack of infrastructure remains the problem in Viet Nam. Most of the farm land in Viet Nam is used to grow rice and vegetables. In Cuba almost all of the farm land that I saw was growing sugar cane and tobacco or being used as grazing land. Only occasionally did I see a rice paddy. Rural families in both countries keep pigs and chickens and tend vegetable gardens. Both harvest fish from the sea.

The difference between the two countries seems to lie in their levels of self-sufficiency. Viet Nam is more self-sufficient than Cuba, particularly in its ability not only to produce food, but also to transport it from rural areas to the cities. There is a difference in personality too. Viet Nam seems lively and optimistic. Cuba appears forlorn.

As we got closer to Hue, we passed through Phu Bai, a thriving suburb and the site of a large American base during the war. As in Chu Lai, there was little left, other than a vast open space, to identify it. Only the airfield remained, now the airport for the city of Hue.

In Hue we visited a Buddhist orphanage filled mostly with children whose mothers were unmarried and could not keep them. Children arrived as infants and stayed until they were grown. The older children learned trades that made them self-supporting. The Buddhist nuns operated a school, licensed by the government, for the younger children. At least one child seemed to have had polio. Cassava, a starchy root grown on site and cheaper than rice, seemed to be the dietary staple. The children, like all the children we met, were a delight. They swarmed around us, an enthusiastic curious mob of miniature humanity.

The Phu Tan Clinic

I had been looking forward to seeing Hue, the Perfume River, the Forbidden City, perhaps a visit to the University and its library. Unfortunately, I contracted dysentery, and spent the entire free day in bed, so I still look forward to seeing Hue. On our way back to Da Nang we paid a brief visit to a clinic just outside Hue near the hamlet of Tan My. The Phu Tan clinic was the busiest one we had seen. It was vaccination day, the day each month when babies are given their shots. The clinic's director gave us a tour of his facility and information regarding the kinds of equipment and supplies he needed. One of his requests was for a *Physicians Desk Reference* (*PDR*). Whenever he prescribed any of the medications provided by UNICEF or other humanitarian organizations, he had to travel into Hue to the hospital there to consult their *PDR* for dosage and other pertinent information. A *PDR* will soon be on its way to Dr. Pham and the Phu Tan clinic will be the recipient of boxes of supplies and equipment when PHAM members return to Viet Nam in the summer of 1995.

For westerners, the state of medicine in Viet Nam is a reality check. There are shortages of everything, and tools used in the States may not be the most appropriate choice for the Vietnamese. For example, disposable syringes are never disposed of, but instead reused again and again. For this reason, older glass syringes are preferred, since they can be more effectively sterilized than the plastic ones, designed to be thrown away after one use. Vietnamese have not developed the immunity to antibiotics that is beginning to be a problem in the West, resulting in the development of ever more powerful antibiotic drugs. These new super-antibiotics are overkill for the Vietnamese and may in fact do them more harm than good.

Although almost impossible to carry, there is a great need for large pieces of equipment such as, beds, ambulances, operating tables, and wheelchairs. Because of the damage caused by exploding ordnance, there is a constant need for prosthetics. Medicines and medical equipment are also in short supply in Cuba. Medical services, while not yet as deficient as those in Viet Nam, are on the decline.

Both countries have placed high priorities on education, and have a history of high levels of literacy. Information services are far better developed in Cuba, although the beginnings of decline are evident. Viet Nam is only

beginning to strengthen its information services. One positive sign was the increase in the numbers of books, for both children and adults, for sale in the book stores compared to 1992. On the other hand, paper shortages in Cuba have cut substantially the number of books being published.

The End and the Beginning

Our flight from Da Nang to Saigon was slightly delayed giving us the opportunity to watch Janet Jackson and Elton John videos on the television at the Da Nang International Airport. The airport t-shirt concession also did a lively business, as the flight was composed mostly of international visitors.

Two free days in Saigon gave me the opportunity to meet with the director of the Ho Chi Minh City University library school and with the president of SIDLA, the Scientific Information, Documentation and Library Association of Ho Chi Minh City. I also met with the editor-in-chief of *Phu Nu*, the women's newspaper of Ho Chi Minh City and was interviewed by one of the paper's reporters. Meeting with these women was a privilege, adding a special dimension to my visit.

The embargo's end had marked the end of Saigon's time warp. I no longer felt that I had just left a few weeks ago, as I had in 1992. Whole blocks of old buildings on Nguyen Hue, Tu Do, and Nguyen Du had been demolished to make way for shiny new high rise office buildings and hotels. The South Koreans had razed what had been their embassy and built a new consulate building on the site.

Signs for CityNet, the cellular phone network, were everywhere. Advertising looked like Times Square: M&M candies, Kodak Express, Shell Oil, Coca-Cola. Dozens of brand new public phone booths accepted brightly colored telephone debit cards. The electricity, while still erratic, had stabilized significantly. At the same time the number of neon signs had increased exponentially. The old Montana BOQ (Bachelors Officers Quarters), now the Montana Hotel, sported a huge neon sign on its roof. Shops were overflowing with consumer goods, toys, clothing, and appliances. I visited a small trade fair where merchandise ranged from artificial flowers to cosmetics, much American made. Shiny new metered tourist taxis sat in front of the Continental Palace Hotel waiting for fares.

Perhaps the most striking and ironic change was in the international departure lounge at Tan Son Nhut Airport. There the new post-embargo economy was in full flower. What had been a rather austere waiting area had been transformed into a shopper's paradise. Duty free shops overflowed with merchandise from ceramic elephants to Chivas Regal. It reminded me, somewhat perversely, of the Cholon PX. The latest rock music videos blared from a television in the seating area. Out a window located next to an enormous liquor display, I could see the remnants of some revetments on the edge of the runway. They were the only visible reminder of the airport I had landed at twenty- five years ago.

But some things never change. The cyclo drivers still peddle their way through traffic, although their bikes now often have gears. My most exciting moment was the head-on crash of my cyclo into an inattentive motorscooter rider. Riders and passenger emerged more or less unscathed. The motorscooter suffered the most damage as its handlebar became attached to the cyclo and had to be ripped loose.

I *still* haven't seen all of Viet Nam. I haven't been back to Nha Trang, or gotten even as close to Cam Ranh as the mainland side of the My Ca Bridge (which may be as close as I will ever get). I still haven't really seen Hanoi or Hue or Dalat or the Delta. I haven't traveled down Route 9 from Dong Ha to Khe Sanh. But I will. Somehow. Someday.

Poetry by Christine A. Schultz

A Raven in Vietnam

He told me a story, about a bird
that had followed him for no reason,
flying from tree to tree, near enough
for him to hear the branches move.

It sang a lot, he said, and once,
just once, it screamed
and I thought it was dead.

The bird was black, and he swore
it was a raven. For almost a week,
it followed him, and at night
kept him awake.

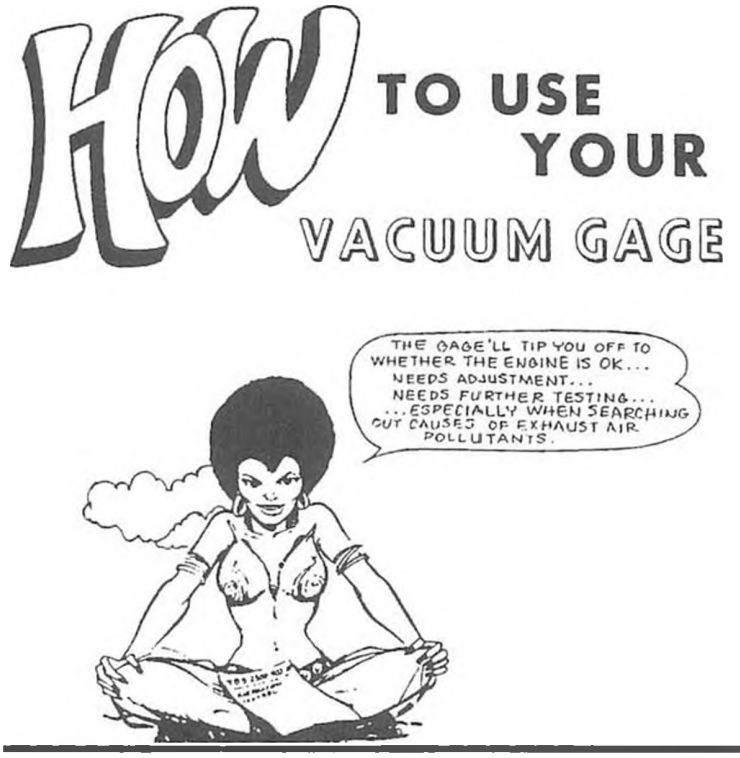
You know, I remember one time
when it was really dark, thinking
how that bird was up there
watching, and I could have sworn
it was laughing, just sitting there
where the tree was a mass of blackness
and making these noises.
I wished I could see it then,
I wished I could shoot it.
And I remember thinking
how there's a lot of things you don't see
that are there just the same.
I remember thinking, how really black
that bird must have been, imagining
the feathers, and wishing, wishing

I had feathers like that too.

I Have Found That Lie

that brilliant midnight
you pretended the moon
was an orange;
you bounced its heavy curve
in the palm of your hand.
I have heard you curse, seen you
wave staplers in the air, shout
something about broken hearts, and seen
something like a drop of blood
emerge from under your thumbnail.
You spilled crazy lies,
stories from the Far East
where even honest men lied,
spilled like so much blood
from your tongue, through your teeth.
What I have to say is simple;
someday, when an army of orange moons
pull the sun in the way of oxen
to the west, a sky full of suns
will color your future to gold.
Some moonless afternoon
when even being alone seems bearable,
you will hold out your hand and find it full.

Christine A. Schultz, 824 Bedford Rd., Schenectady, NY 12308.



Thoughts on the Zouave Bridge

Alan Farrell, Department of Modern Languages, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden-Sydney, VA 23943.

The French, they are a moody race. When I was a student in Paris, longlonglong ago, threading my adolescent way through the labyrinth of my own burgeoning passions and along what the novelist Duhamel (himself a veteran of war) has called "ruelles creuses et pourries"—the "hollow, rotting alleys"—of the *métropole*, I learned to read some of those moods. It's easier than you might think. The French walk off *their* moods. There is a sympathy to be found, if that is the word, along streets whose shades and sounds, whose pulse and spirit, can mirror one's own. Or is it the other way around? Anyhow. Certain streets invite the melancholy wanderer. Some the ill-loved. Others the jaunty. The flirtatious. The ambitious. The aggressive. The irksome (Christ knows there's enough of them). And on and on. The French will even go so far, after the urgings of their humor, as to take this or the other *bridge* on the way home, ambling across that one of the dozen odd time-honored crossings of the Seine that seems best to reflect their expectations, follies, doubts, and fears just then, letting the coursing waters below perhaps carry off the spleen of the day. Medieval despair: *le pont neuf*. Grandiose aspiration: *le pont Alexandre III*. Heartbreak: *le pont Mirabeau*. A harmless enough vice if a modest enough consolation, it seemed to me then.

In those days, my favorite of the Parisian bridges was the *pont de l'Alma*, known also as the *pont des Zouaves*. Celebrating in theory at least—though fewer and fewer French are any longer able to identify it—a victory of French arms in the Crimea in 1854, the bridge features, carved into the upright supports beneath the span, the martial figures of so many *zouaves*, those colonial infantrymen recruited from among the Algerian tribes, whose distinctive uniform of baggy red pants (*les culs rouges*, they used to be called) and fez adorn these pillars. Each soldier glares out over the sparkling water, hands folded across the muzzle of his rifle—you fancy how—chin on hands, fierce mustache bristling, brows knit as if in silent contemplation of...what? The looming battle? Lost comrades? Nameless whores? The *wadis* and *djebels* of his homeland?

These were guys, of course, who probably shrank at nothing, before, during, or after the battle. Who had families back home in Algeria to whom they sent devotedly their pittance. Who whored and drank and blasphemed. Who died in vain attempts to retrieve the regimental guidon, once fallen. Who like as not knifed one another over a pouch of tobacco. Who shouldered the Honor of France. A dubious honor, too, they surely knew, since it led inevitably to the subjugation of their own race and nation. Yet I have leant in idle study of those staid sculptures many a solitary hour for no good reason, just because I thought I read in those features a sentiment that sung to me in my imbecile adolescent *désarroi*. It was something for which I hungered, even as a young

man, without comprehending. I recognized it instinctively and without the intervention of any other agency. It was independent of cognition. It was... What the hell was it? Where had I seen it? Where had that *farouche* and stern demeanor first shone for me in a mode and manner that my feeble erudition could not dispel or clarify? The man staring out over the muzzle of his rifle?

Of course! It was Billy Yank, who took his ease, braced on his Springfield rifle atop a high pylon in the middle of our common in the little Vermont town I grew up in. The statue on the green, on so many greens in small town America. Billy Yank, Johnny Reb. The doughboy with his stiff high collar and soup-tureen helmet. Grandpa in the Cuban campaign hat and cartridge belt hefting his Krag. Oh, I'd seen them all through New England. You have, too. Not always in the pose that so struck me later: sometimes in that beckoning posture that invites their fellows—and us along with them—to... Come on! Come up! Follow me! Hardly art, we'd have to say. The proportions are always wrong. Fingers too long, legs too strong, shoulders too broad. And how do they get all the gear and harnesses and stuff so detailed? And who's the asshole—universal unseen presence—who breaks the bayonets and the thumbs and visors off?

That was the image I had in mind, though it was not exactly right. Whatever animated Billy Yank was not exactly the same thing I thought I read in the face of my *zouaves* . Billy's expression was a sort of dim, a sort of clouded, well... satisfaction, rather. And Billy had never really urged me to *imitate* him. He was there to *remind* me, that was all. He and grandpa took no evident pride in their victory. And most had left home only reluctantly and come home, when they did, gladly. And the hortatory statues with their beckoning arms were, after all, urging someone evidently not impelled by his own insufficient enthusiasm, perhaps even someone not a little scared, and maybe even hugging that dirt jusssssssssssssst a second longer than the rest of the line. Later in combat I would discover that the real image, the one that probably *should* adorn the monuments and steles of small town America is that of an eminently martial and bellowing sergeant about to deliver a kick to a comrade hugging the deck, planting a huge, over-sculpted brogan into the brisket of Billy Yank who feverishly pretends to be looking to his priming cap jusssssssssst that second longer than the rest of the line.

Some even wore the uniform in disarray. Many statues had unbuttoned cuffs and collars, seems to me. Rolled up sleeves and unbloused trousers. Check out those Jarheads on the Iwo Jima monument. An unwillingness barely concealed to put that uniform on right, to do things up to the last eyelet. They're not professionals. They're Americans. Reluctant warriors. Warriors in time of battle. Not before. Not after. And never in search of. No, those brooding monoliths glaring down from village squares along my New England river valley, peering wistfully off into distant visionary horizons, were not my *zouaves*. The look in the eye of my *zouave* was different still. There was something dark and tribal and, um, er...archly virile that compelled me in that look, that seized me and burnt into my recollection. That made me stare back in spite of myself as if into my own reflection. Something I could not define.

Later, as a paratrooper at Ft Bragg, I would meet Iron Mike, the great benevolent guardian of the post gateway, statue of a paratrooper from World War II, with his characteristic slantpocket blouse and airborne chinguard dangling undone from his steel pot. Iron Mike loomed over the main drag, as if taking a break. He wore sleeves rolled up, cocked his helmet back in non-regulation fashion, laid his outsized Thompson across his knee. Most of all, though, Mike looked tired. We young troopers worshipped Mike because we saw in him the fatigue we knew only too well from training and because in his expression and pose we recognized the gaunt features of the sunburnt men who were in those days straggling back in ones and twos from Vietnam with sunken cheeks and tales of the jungle. Mike had been there. His face showed it. Not so much Pride. Not remembrance. But... *authenticity* ! Familiarity with those accessory gestures a soldier could recognize. Yet it was not this authenticity, this familiarity, either, that I remember from the *pont des Zouaves.*

Nor was it the ideological pose of Bronze Brucie, that immense statue of a Green Beret they planted in the middle of Smoke Bomb Hill, where us Special Forces wannabes pumped out pushups and pounded out Morse code to earn the twosided, green, pooltable felt hat that draped so winsomely across the forehead of this astonishing figure, though f*igurine* might be a better word. Brucie, so called because—unlike Mike, in whose weary posture we saw genuine soldierliness and manliness—this apparition had his head cocked at so bizarre and fay an angle and his wrist flung out in such a dainty and airy attitude—allegedly one of generosity and philanthropy and perpetual willingness to "free the oppressed"—that the overall effect was one of—in the end—*solicitation* rather than *elevation*. Brucie held his M-16A1 aloft, his elongated finger confidently *outside* the triggerguard as proof, according to the purveyors of the monument, that he was offering a helping hand first and would only in the event it were slapped aside—or bitten, I suppose—and then with regret, have recourse to the force symbolized in his weapon. He didn't seem to look you in the eye, poor Brucie. It was a failure of political or ideological art: too many icons crowded onto a single pedestal, too many messages sent at once, too many parts of the pose to be read, too many directions for the off-balance, twisted Brucie to bear on those deliciously broad but awkwardly canted shoulders. The impression was one of discomfort or illness at ease. Hardly of grandeur. We laughed at Brucie. At his absurd posture. At his pretension.

Later in Saigon I stumbled across yet another martial visage, this time planted dead in that middle of that jostling, unruly, fragrant, sensuous, brutal capital: the sadly and only-too-visibly concrete statue of a Republican soldier in his American combat boots and too-big-for-him American helmet, his Asian features set in a look of Determination Writ Large. Large, enough! Must have been fifty feet high, this thing. Not merely the artistic distention of proportion, but an enormous, cartoonish,

infinitely vulgar parody of Man. Like the immense glowering Russian soldiers one sees—or used to—in the (former) Soviet satellite nations, swaddled in greatcoats, that one fugitive flap torn open by a roaring Wind of Aggression into which the spector lurches with concrete PPsH firmly in massive concrete hand. Grimly defiant, legs cocked as he faces tellingly u*phill*, The Saigon giant hefts a *1919-A6 company machine gun in his hands* (no sling, either, as I recall, an image any infantryman—an Asian most of all—would find improbable to the point of laughter), one hand around the barrel—usually redhot after a single belt of ammo—and the other clasped around the pistol grip. The 1919-A6, weighing in at something around 25 pounds and far too big for this figure (looks more like a knight with his lance), *can* be fired from the hip in the assault, but hardly by anyone this small. It represents a ludicrous choice of weapon for such a tableau and surely must encapsulate the thousand inequities and absurdities of a conflict in which a people perfectly capable of waging war on its own behalf and in its own way lets itself be draped in this *costume* not even *uniform* , saddled with awkward, unwieldy armament, and shooed into battle of doubtful purpose and evidently without object. Still later I seem to remember seeing that statue torn down in the early days of the *nettoyage* of Saigon by the *bo doi* from the North who must have had *their* word to say about the figure's vainglorious posture in light of how easily they had waded through thousands of these guys and how swiftly their tanks had churned from Da Nang to the Capital on roadways littered with thrown away 1919-A6's. And if one of those guys didn't piss on the statue before they knocked it over and smashed it into chunks and paved roads with it, then I don't know infantrymen. I sure would have.

So now I'm my looking for my own peace as I shuffle along the Washington Mall while in front of me some breathless young squire wearing sandals a*nd* socks explains to an oh-so-serious young woman with an imposing allotment of haunch that we, like, had to bury *this* memorial in a hole, see, so it wouldn't soar, see, like the *other*—and grand—monuments around here and so, like, our humiliation will be complete and endless and formalized. And oh, Jeezus, haven't I sat in seminars, read in articles, seen on television how the fucking thing begins and ends in the same place or something, draws the eye in on itself, forces the mind to calculate at random, impels self-reflection and on and on. Yeah, yeah. I guess so. And sure enough, I've found myself unable to resist poking that timid finger out to touch gingerly the name of a buddy whose face now twenty-five years later I summon up with a culpability allthemore fierce because the contours and features of that face I just cannot quite connect in my mind's eye any longer.

And over here is the next installment in the apparently endless train of b*ibelots* we intend to plunk down on this our national midden of sorrow (as I write it is bruited that soon the statue of a nurse or nurses with a wounded guy draped across them *pieta* - fashion will occupy yet another corner of this copse): the three druggies. And I've had this one explained to me at wearisome length, too. Statistics assure us that the average trooper in *this* war was nineteen years old and that *this* battle was borne with disproportionate degree by elements of our social fabric we either made (or didn't) to sacrifice disproportionately for reasons variously dumb or vicious (or not): blacks, Hispanics, and surfers. And so I stare up at these three guys with their authentic-looking gear, authentically slung as all the *Life* magazine photos show it, and authentically draped with authentic GI towels and with the smallest guy—as I think I recall—authentically toting the M-60. And none of these guys very martial. *Au repos* , we might say. With their buttons undone and their trousers unbloused. With their hair unkempt and unshorn and their boots tied wrong. Fuck you, Sergeant Major! With their flak jacket hanging open (that's an Article XV up on the 'Z). And with their melancholy gaze—I am reverently and at length informed—cast searchingly off onto the distant planar surfaces of the Black Rock where—and again some one of the temple vestals *will* explain—their buddies' names bake—and *crack* now I hear—in the Washington sunlight.

I don't like this cluster of images. I don't like the sodden, parasitic sanctimony that has overgrown each shape and chunk of statuary like ivy, clinging and ultimately destructive. I don't like the improbable conceit of the endless guides, directories, and explicators it takes to make sense of that stuff. And I don't know why recollection of that war has to satisfy anyone but those who served, few enough of whom—so far I can tell—did so for reasons other than their own. And I don't care how many more bronzes we erect to how many more constituencies and subsets of the warrior band we scattered up and down the sad length of Vietnam. In fact, I'm not sure why, should we really want to, we can't build a statue, slightly larger than lifesize, to e*very* sunuvabitch who *died* in Vietnam, no! to every sunuvabitch who *went* there. Would only cost about 1.6 billion dollars, about half of what we spent on towels in the Congressional Sauna each year. We have the names, photos (and judging by the Vietnam literature, every sunuvabitch who *did* go there took at least 312 photographs of himself holding his—or someone's—M-16), stats. A statue to every sunuvabitch who *served* —not to say *fought* —over there. Except one. Except me. I want to be the only guy in the country who's not in this orgy of commemoration, purgation, expiation.

Because I still haven't seen what I claim I saw in those voiceless and ever-enduring Zouaves. But I think I know where it is. It's in the face of the Professional. It's in the face of the Lifer. It's written across the features of the leathered, weathered washouts and alkies who were the backbone of the Corps and the guts of the Army before us postpubescent crybabies volunteered, got drafted, stumbled into uniform. It's the guys, unflatteringly but not without sympathy represented by Captain Queeg, who as we learn in the attorney's empassioned rebuff of his client at the end of T*he Caine Mutiny*, "stood those cold, lonely, endless watches between the wars while all the rest of us were scrapping to make money" and—more recently—by the equally unlovable Colonel from *A Few*

Good Men who, while admitting that his "existence" is "grotesque," still wants to know—if *he* doesn't do it—just "who's gonna stand on that wall?"

Now I remember these guys. The ones I hated with all my being. The ones who were not impressed by my untutored—and untested—probity or my fresh-minted college education or my healf-hearted and often ineffectual efforts to do a*lmost* what they told me, *nearly* what they ordered me, *close enough* to what they demanded. The ones with the tattoos and and the grizzled white-walls and the beer guts, who nonetheless made the five-mile runs with us kids every morning, even if they did now and again have to stop and puke out last night's beer and unwholesome food. Who hassled and hounded and tortured us out of our adolescent dream-world into a new one where responsibility, accountability, and, yes...*virility* beckoned. Who remorselessly intoned the litany of military technique, drill, practice. Who took us into combat with the confidence of a Professional—and the vulnerability of any other man. Who stood up full length under fire to show us it could be done. Who, in short, saved our lives, even when it meant applying that kick in the brisket to the man who lingered jusssssssssssst a second longer behind cover, before letting go his return fire, before covering his buddy. For those of us who *were* saved, were saved by these guys—in combat, you fight or die—and they saved us in spite of ourselves.

They saved m*any* of us in spite of *most* of us. They bore the insulting and childish opprobrium of us middle-class mama's boys for their vulgarity and coarseness: "If you men enjoy my class, the Army will pay me $534 this month. If you men do not enjoy this class, the Army will pay me $534 this month." They sucked up—though many only feigned not to notice—the niggling corrections to their language and their writing churlishly proffered by us college pukes: "What's a *shock exorber*, Firss'arn? Is it anything like a *shock absorber*?" They surrendered any hope of a family life—"My wife's on the rag this week, so I can stay here and fuck with you till midnight if you don't get this battle drill right. Unnerstand?"—and many had long since shed wives and homes for that ten-by-ten at the end of the barracks building. They raked and stooped and polished and picked up pine cones and redid needless chores over and over and endlessly abased themselves between wars. And saved us civilian candy-asses when the time came. And bore it all with a rumpled dignity—a soiled nobility, I say—a *farouche* stoicism and pride in service and fidelity that pensions and bennies reward but do not record. Theirs was the look I remember—the patient, unblinking regard of him who did it the hard way *because it was* the hard way—from my hours spent hanging over the *pont des Zouaves* . The inextinguishable light that shines from out a soul that has known duty, allthemore radiant for its—even fragmentary—understanding of the thanklessness of that duty and its irreducible simplicity: *serve in the shadows and die.*

Jim Lynch on Convoy Operations in Viet Nam

Jim Lynch, RD 3, Box 127-B, Howard, PA 16841.

Everyone knows a little about convoy operations in the Viet Nam war, but few people I've encountered know very much. Truck drivers in Viet Nam are remembered as REMFs and seldom get any recognition for anything they did (or maybe I'm simply overly sensitive to imagined slights). I think they did a big and a tough job and, despite my desire at the time to have been "in the shit," I'm proud to have worked with them.

In *Rise and Fall of an American Army*, Shelby Stanton discusses the place of "convoy battles" in the overall picture, pointing out among other things that "truck movement provided most of the support for over a million Army troops dispersed over sixty-thousand square miles." (p. 289) He goes on to note that convoys offered "lucrative targets with minimal risk" to the bad guys. By 1969, in fact, we were convinced that our vulnerability and the dramatic press that resulted from successful ambushes with maximum casualties made us particular targets; this *did* explain why several of our convoys were ambushed on their way home, *empty*. Although the damage to overall U.S. logistics was greatly reduced by attacking an empty convoy, we were less alert on the way home and it was close to dark, so the opportunity to inflict heavy casualties—perhaps to even get part of the convoy stopped and clean us out overnight—was increased. Although direct contact with the other guys was sporadic and most drivers were concentrating on the road too much to even get a glimpse of the people who were shooting at us, it could be and often was intense. It wasn't all that unusual for drivers to be converted to infantry in an instant; this happened often enough that "at least two Medals of Honor were awarded to drivers of the 1st Logistical Command." (*After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam*, Ronald Spector, p. 40) "The bravery of the long-haul drivers became so commonplace that MACV recognized a special, unofficial Line Haul tab which was worn proudly over their 1st Logistical Command patches." (Stanton, p. 292) As a platoon leader and, later, company commander with these guys, my job was not to screw it up too badly.

The 48th Transportation Group (Truck) operated out of Long Binh, the quintessential REMF Heaven, with a bowling alley, swimming pools, at least one "steam 'n cream," a Chase Manhattan branch, and USARV Headquarters. Most of these facilities were "assigned" to other units and we seldom, if ever, saw them, much less took advantage of them. The 48th consisted of two truck battalions (the 5th "Doers" and the 6th "Orient Express") and a Quartermaster battalion of tankers carried POL under our operational control on daily convoys. At any given time, as many as three or four of the Group's companies, which numbered between eleven and thirteen in 1969, were assigned to local hauling duties. The permanent duty of the balance of the trucks and men was long haul convoys.

These convoys covered a huge area consisting of all of III Corps and IV Corps as far south as Can Tho. On any given day, an average of eight to ten convoys consisting of as many as 650 trucks left Long Binh between 6am and 8am. I can't remember a day when there was not a convoy to Tay Ninh, Dau Tieng, Quan Loi (Andy), Phuoc Vinh and, until the 9th Div. moved out, Dong Tam. Other frequent destinations included Xuan Loc, Can Tho, Vung Tau, Song Be, Cu Chi and Lai Khe. These destinations took the convoys along the only roads through some fairly well-known locales: War Zone C, the Iron Triangle, the Mekong Delta, the Michelin, War Zone D, "Thunder Road" and so on. Security and road clearance was the responsibility of the unit through whose AO we were traveling. During my year there, I worked with the 1st Cav, the Big Red One, the 11th ACR, the 25th Div., the 9th Div., the 82nd AA, the Thais and the Aussies. We all drew conclusions about the support these units gave us, the effectiveness of their road clearing operations, and their response times. "1st Cav clears the roads poorly and uses very light escorts so they can induce an ambush and react *real* fast so as to get in a big body count." "Blackhorse is fantastic—great escorts and they're right there if you get in trouble!" "Tropic Lightning has the AO with the biggest and worst ambushes—they're Tropic Molasses when it comes to getting in there to clear out an ambush. Left a convoy to Dau Tieng out there *all night* once while Chuck crawled all over those trucks—still got two MIA's from that convoy!" Like everything else in the Viet Nam war, there's some truth, some fiction and a healthy dose of myth in all of this.

Regardless of its size, every convoy was routinely commanded by a 48th Trans platoon leader who was usually the only officer assigned. (Sometimes a company commander would replace one of his platoon leaders—I did this fairly often—or just ride along. The same is true of some of the BN staff or even a platoon leader from the quartermaster outfit.) This lieutenant was responsible for all convoy operations, although nominally not for security, and he had one NCO per march unit to assist him; a march unit consisted of twenty trucks and drivers, with an M-60 machine gunner in every fifth truck. Each NCO and officer rode in a jeep with a driver, M-60 machine gunner and radio. There was also a trail party which had a wrecker (the 40% of the time that one was available) and several bobtails to hitch up to trailers when the tractor was broken down or blown up. The "good" convoy commanders always rode with the trail party. Convoys could be as small as 30 vehicles to as large as 140, with 60 to 100 on average. Although everything imaginable was hauled, Class V (ammunition) made up by far the highest percentage, with POL coming in second.

The mission really started the day before, when each company was notified by battalion of its requirements for the next day. We'd be notified that we were to send so many officers and so many NCOs to Battalion Operations for the next day; at the same time, we'd be notified that we were to provide so many trucks, gunners, etc. for each of as many as ten locations the next morning. (As I explained in an earlier story, there was no unit integrity and each convoy would be made up of a random mixture of trucks from various units—sometimes from every unit in the Group.) At Operations, the officers who were commanding the convoys and the NCOs were given their assignments for the next day and briefings on their mission. The NCO briefing concentrated on the nature of the cargo, offloading procedures, and the like while of officer's briefing had to do with operational and security considerations. It was at the briefing that some swapping took place; while assignments for various locations were theoretically moved around among units to spread out the wealth, some officers had a preference for some locations (I, for example, preferred the Tay Ninh/Dau Tieng/Quan Loi routes for reasons of youth and stupidity. Trades were easy for me to work.). Once the briefings were done, the officers and NCOs who were traveling together the next day—who often had not worked together before and who sometimes hadn't even met—often conferred briefly. Then the evening was ours. It was usually about 8pm by then.

It is at this point that the strangeness of what we did sets in. The road could be a nasty place and sometimes you didn't look forward to the next day—even with no danger, it was a major grind. Yet, right then, we were in relative comfort. We didn't have barracks buildings or Quonset huts, but we did have homemade hootches with screens and 55 gal. drum revetments. When it worked, we had hot water and there were hootch maids who did laundry during the day. We had an old tent dyed and hung out in front of the orderly room and we had movies at night and there was an "EM Club" and a little hole in the wall for NCOs. I was with two companies which were separated off from the rest of the Group, so we only had eight or nine officers (of an authorized twelve) at any given time; our little "BOQ" had a gathering room and a big enough refrigerator to keep lots of beer cold. Of course, we had a mess hall and decent, sometimes very good, hot food every night. Not really so bad, and Long Binh hardly ever got hit.

I've often thought that our role was a little like that of pilots, maybe like the 8th Air Force in WWII. I say this with all due respect and not with the intent of comparing the danger we faced or the expertise they exhibited with our role. But there are similarities. We spent most of our evenings in comparatively civilized surroundings and we usually slept in a bunk—our own bunk. Then, before the sun was up, we were off to stage in the dark to deliver our "payload" (true, we were not the direct delivery vehicle—mostly that was 105's, 155's etc.). We were slow moving, moved by the same routes at the same times every day, were lightly armored and carried little firepower, and relied on escorts and relentless forward movement to defend us if Charles decided to take a pop. After delivering the payload, it was a long (mostly) empty ride home to do maintenance, rest up, take part in a little entertainment. Somewhere in there we got a briefing about tomorrow's "target", got some sleep and started all over again in the morning. Although 365 days was technically the tour, those who had put in 20,000 convoy miles were generally given the same option as the air crews with 25 missions—in our case we put them on

night loading or local haul duty if they wished (many preferred to stay on the road).

Out of bed at 4AM and over to breakfast if we could eat. Then we drew weapons and ammo, picked up C-Rats and mounted up. For the officers going out, convoy instructions and SOIs had been locked up in the Operations hootch overnight. Radio checks and proper mounting and operation of the jeep's M-60 were a priority, especially when breaking in a new gunner (I went through a few of them although my drivers stayed pretty steady). Then we were off to the staging area, which was a road leading out of the south of LB, just below those big, air conditioned stateside looking buildings that housed USARV HQ. Hardly a light on in them!

Staging area was a zoo. Operations guys determined the order that the convoys lined up and it was my job to put the march units in order. Basically it was Class I (food) back through Class VI (POL)—you tried to have all the ammo and POL in separate, 20 truck march units. Drivers were late because they were running all over 3rd ORD looking for the load of whatever was staged on Pad No. such-and-such in the wee hours. Officers and NCOs tried to organize everyone and check readiness. Couldn't do much in the dark and confusion, so you just checked the obvious: lugs not on backwards (if they are, they tighten as the truck moves and the wheel catches on fire), the chains and binders set so the loads don't fall off, and the air lines connecting the trailer brakes. (All of these are were easy to get wrong, and "mistakes" were sometimes made on purpose by drivers who just didn't want to go out today.) A truck company was authorized forty drivers for each twenty-truck platoon, although we seldom had more than thirty assigned; that left us enough for four gunners and six night loaders per platoon, *if* everything was going well. On average, we'll put sixteen or seventeen of our trucks out on convoy daily, with the others being repaired or on a local run. If we were lucky, we'd get enough drivers who *wanted* to be on convoy to match up with the number of trucks, gunners and jeeps we needed to send out. If not, we had loads falling off two miles outside the gate.

Time to roll. The convoys left roughly in order of the length of the haul. The first few miles were paved road with almost no history of action. It was one to two hours before we got to the point where things were (usually) really active. We had to pass Cu Chi, or Lai Khe or Bear Cat to really begin to sweat. So the early part of the trip was pretty relaxing; check out the radios, get to know the NCOs, take out the camera for "targets of opportunity", review the SOI that's never up to date anyway. On this part of the trip every village was loaded with kids yelling for cigarettes and "Cs" and some of the drivers obliged—others zinged the cans at the kids' heads until I put a stop to that. Stalls in every village were full of very smelly stuff and fly-covered meat, all of it surrounded by boxes of Tide, cans of "Cs", American cigarettes by the pack, and more. If we stopped, kids and women materialized out of nowhere to sell Coke (The warning went: "Don't do that! They cut off the bottom, put in battery acid and solder it back on." They didn't, but the ice was contaminated and we didn't need drivers with dysentery, so we went with what worked.) Stop long enough, whores appeared as well, offering "boom boom" in the cab. In that case, we officers told the enlisted men the "razor blade in the vagina" story, but it works less well than the battery acid tale. Penicillin is, indeed, a GI's best friend.

If we were in really congested areas or if we were just unlucky, there'd be an accident; there was at least one on about every third convoy I ran. If we were lucky, it usually wasn't serious, but those little lambrettas zipped in and out of the convoy and it took only a nudge from one of our trucks to send one flying. It was said with not too much humor that some of our companies had a bigger body count per month than a number of leg outfits. What one of our tractor trailers loaded with 155 rounds could do to a guy on a motorbike is as ugly as anything I saw as a result of "hostile fire." By any standards we (Americans) would apply, the Vietnamese were almost invariably at fault in these accidents—they didn't respect the size of our vehicles, made unexpected lane changes, paid no attention to rights of way, etc. But then this wasn't America. Anyway, we got pretty callous about the accidents and somewhat immune to the visible affects.

Depending on the destination, somewhere within the first hour or two we stopped at a preordained point to hook up with security; until then we just had a couple of MP jeeps for traffic control. At this point we left the better roads, some of which were even paved, and moved out on the real line haul. The escorts could be anything from MPs in a couple of V-100's to M-60 tanks, Dusters, quad-50's mounted on trucks—whatever the road and the situation called for. Most often it was four or five tracks with an MP gun jeep or two. (The escort commander always rode up front and the convoy commander was in the rear; sometimes we only saw each other briefly at the destination, sometimes not at all. Some of us got to know each other a bit.) At that point, the NCOs went up and down the march units to make sure everyone had their steel pots and flak jackets on and that weapons had been checked. We often switched to a different set of pushes here.

The scenery and the roads changed drastically. There was very little traffic, the villages were not friendly and we didn't stop or even slow down. No more beer can hootches or boom boom. The roads were awful—dusty dry or quagmires of mud, depending on the season—and the bumps were so violent that many drivers had permanent abrasions on the bridge of their noses from the steel pots banging down on them (many also had chronic kidney pain). During monsoon it was impossible to keep dry and warm and during the dry season it was impossible to breathe or see—we turned the color of the red dust permanently.

Sights were weird and magnificent. There was Nui Ba Den (Black Virgin Mountain) which dominated everything around for beaucoup miles. There was the Michelin rubber plantation that went on forever and in which there were always many divisions of the enemy hiding—we just *knew* it. On the way to Phuoc Vinh (I think, I can't remember) there was a place we used to call the "Roller Coaster of the Gods" where the old rail lines had been torn up and rails curved into the air for what seemed like a

hundred feet. There was the back road to Quan Loi where someone in the rubber (cleared back on most roads about 50-75 meters) could reach out and grab you. There was another back road—to Dau Tieng, I think—that was so torn up by Arclights that it reminded me of my times riding a dune buggy in the Mojave. There was ""Titty Village" (not my terminology) which needs no explanation. Oh yeah, the walking catfish on the way down into the Delta—weird shit! And then, the road to Song Be; "Thunder Road"—closed for three years until it was reopened during my tour—banana trees, Rome plow handiwork and spooky as hell. Who knows what else I've forgotten?

As far as enemy contact went, this was where it was at. I'd say we lost 15-20 trucks a week to mines. Since I intentionally chose the more "exciting" routes, it was more like an average of one truck for every second convoy I ran. These mines ran the gamut from some kind of Chinese anti-tank mine, that usually disabled the truck but seldom hurt the driver badly, to big—really *big*—command detonated things that took out half the road. There was other excitement. Limited small arms fire from snipers (a few bursts and a di di), was fairly common—probably more common than we knew because the trucks and tracks, etc. made so much noise that we wouldn't even notice unless they hit something. The trail party was most hassled by this kind of contact, where a broken down or blown up truck could be left miles behind the convoy with just the tow truck, a bobtail to take on the trailer, the wrecker and the convoy commander's jeep. This was the kind of group a handful of VC or NVA could take on with comfort. (Needless to say, convoy commanders tried to make very quick decisions about repairing a broken-down truck or just towing it and switching its load to one of the bobtails, or even leaving it. Since wreckers were at a premium and we only had a limited number of bobtails, it was better to fix what we could so we didn't run out) Seems like this sniping and harassing stuff happened once or twice a day among the eight or ten convoys we ran.

Of course, the real big deal was an ambush. They varied with the road and they could run in spurts, but my recollection is that we ran into a bona fide ambush two or three times a week out of the average of fifty to seventy convoys run by the group. Of course, since they almost always took place on about four of five "hot" routes, the odds on those roads were much higher. The drill was always to run through the kill zone as fast as possible and hope that the road didn't get blocked by a burning truck or track. Charlie's objective, of course, was to block the road. It isn't too hard to imagine the picture presented by a couple of dozen trucks (or more) loaded with ammunition and POL protected by a couple of M-60s and a track or two and just *sitting* in the middle of a one-lane dirt road, while some guys back in the rubber fifty to seventy-five meters away pop away with RPGs and automatic weapons. You don't need to be there too long to get the full benefit of the situation. Shelby Stanton points out that, " Convoy commanders under fire were hard pressed to maintain continuing radio control of their convoy, direct counter ambush measures with their gun trucks, and give precise locational data for helicopter and artillery support." (290) He got that right! Although these tasks were normally broken down between two officers—the convoy commander and the escort commander—it was hellish.

Mines, accidents, snipers and even ambushes notwithstanding, we finally got where we were headed most of the time. This was a zoo even worse than the staging area. Depending on how long it took us to get there, turnaround time was either short or absurd—we had to leave in time to be back in LB or on the relatively secure roads nearby before dark. A time was set, everyone understood that they had to be back at the staging area by then or be left and the NCOs were off to various offloading points; from the ammo dump to the PX. The convoy commander might be briefing local road security folks on any action that happened on the way up or he was running around trying to "supervise' the turnaround. Since almost everything we carried was on trailers, offloading often consisted of simply dropping one trailer and picking up an empty for the run back. Often we hauled back trailers loaded with salvage equipment, from trucks and tracks to Hueys. If too many trailers had accumulated at the base camp, they were often piggybacked so we could haul two for the price of one.

Usually the trip back was faster and uneventful. By this time of day any mines had been detonated although someone occasionally planted one after we'd run through in the morning. Sometimes guys fell asleep and ran off the road; although it's hard to imagine how anyone could doze off on those terrible roads I know I slept in the jeep often enough—you get used to anything. Of course, as I mentioned earlier, we did begin to encounter ambushes of returning, empty convoys. I can remember coming back from Dau Tieng on one trip when an empty tanker in the last march unit, which was just up in front of the trail party, was hit by one burst of automatic weapons fire. The fumes (JP 4, I think) were enough to make it go up like a soda can with a cherry bomb inside—the driver just coasted off the road. When we got to him he was fine except for busted eardrums and wet trousers. That's all there was—one burst. Next day, almost in the same spot, they did it to another tanker on someone else's convoy. Usually the trip back was not so eventful.

The last hurdle of the return trip was getting through the vicinity of Long Binh. Chickenshit abounded by 1969. Whole convoys could be issued speeding citations on the paved roads near Bien Hoa/Long Binh. Technically, guys could also be nailed for not wearing steel pots and flack jackets, although everyone had them off by the time we got back to the paved roads. And then, there was the famous baseball-caps-for-troops-stationed-at-LB rule: my guys could get a citation for wearing a bush hat while coming in through the LB gate.

By the time we returned it was anywhere from 5PM to 7PM (sometimes later) and Motor Stables were at 6PM. If we got back early, there was time to eat, etc. before Motor Stables. Most days, however, the guys did them right after they got off the road. Officers "supervised," although we couldn't be there every day and most of us didn't know shit, anyway. I knew enough to tell if a guy

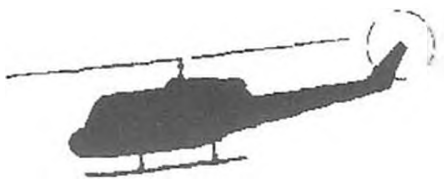
did the basics and I did learn to drive one of the trucks (just around the company area) although it was against regulations. (Dumb regulation! The guys liked it and it really did help me to understand a bit of what they did.) I couldn't have put that fifth wheel cleanly under a trailer if there'd been a case of cold Michelob in it. Anyhow, by 7 or 8PM the drivers were done, weapons were turned in and the men were free to eat, if they hadn't done that. Although we officially worked a twelve hour day, seven days a week, most of these guys put in fourteen to sixteen hours routinely. For the officers it just started all over with the briefing and there was a couple more hours of work to do. Officers seldom ran two days in a row, so we could sleep in until about 7AM the next morning and spend the day doing other duties, from assigned company duties like supply or mess officer to special duties assigned by Battalion, like a Court Martial or an Article 100 investigation. Of course, at times everyone spent extra hours preparing for the upcoming CMMI or IG Inspection (yeah, we actually had that shit in Vietnam!).

Even with all the rear area bullshit, there was always a little time to relax and there was a hootch that had been cleaned up by a Mamasan and polished boots and cold beer and a hot shower and a clean uniform. If there had been a truck assigned to unload a reefer ship down at Newport, we could be sure part of one of the loads had been accidentally dumped and that there would be a little charcoal grill heated up and as much filet mignon or lobster tail as we could eat that night. The movie might be good and, if not, there was always poker or pinochle. Or, we could run over to the Group O-Club or, on special occasions, to the II Field Force Club which was very good.

A guy thought about the day on the road. If it had been a tough day, we sat there eating lobster tail, maybe thinking about the fact that we just dusted off a guy five or six hours ago. We thought about eating lunch from C's we opened with a P-38 while bouncing down the road, and about trying to keep the dust out of the fruit cocktail. We thought about how fucking shitty it was to be watching Ann Margaret or someone getting partly nude on screen while the guys who were our escorts today—who maybe saved our asses—were laagered out there in the bush with maybe some dog-eared *Playboy*. Today I was one of them, tonight I'm a REMF.

"Yeah, I'm a real prick behind the wheel, but get me off the freeways and I'm just a pussycat. Honey, you gotta' understand, it's a jungle out there!"

Weird fuckin' war!



Poetry by Claudia Conley

PTSD

I am walking point.
You can feel the tension behind the bushes.
You could cut it with a machete.
It's an incredibly dangerous job.
I just want to scream and scream hysterically
And open fire into anywhere,
Killing everyone.
Or step on a mine
And get it over with,
Blown up into a million pieces of what might have been.
Sleep equals peace.

Claudia Conley, 6725 Tesuque Dr., NW, Albuquerque, NM 87120. *Claudia Conley went to college in the mid-seventies, with many Viet Nam veterans. She wondered how they had handled so much fear. She had similar discussions with her Southeast Asian refugee patients when she worked at Virginia Mason Hospital in Seattle as a registered nurse. This year she was diagnosed with PTSD. She was sexually abused as a child and feels that working in neo-natal ICU, with so many life-and-death situations, also contributed to her PTSD.*

Poetry by David A. Willson

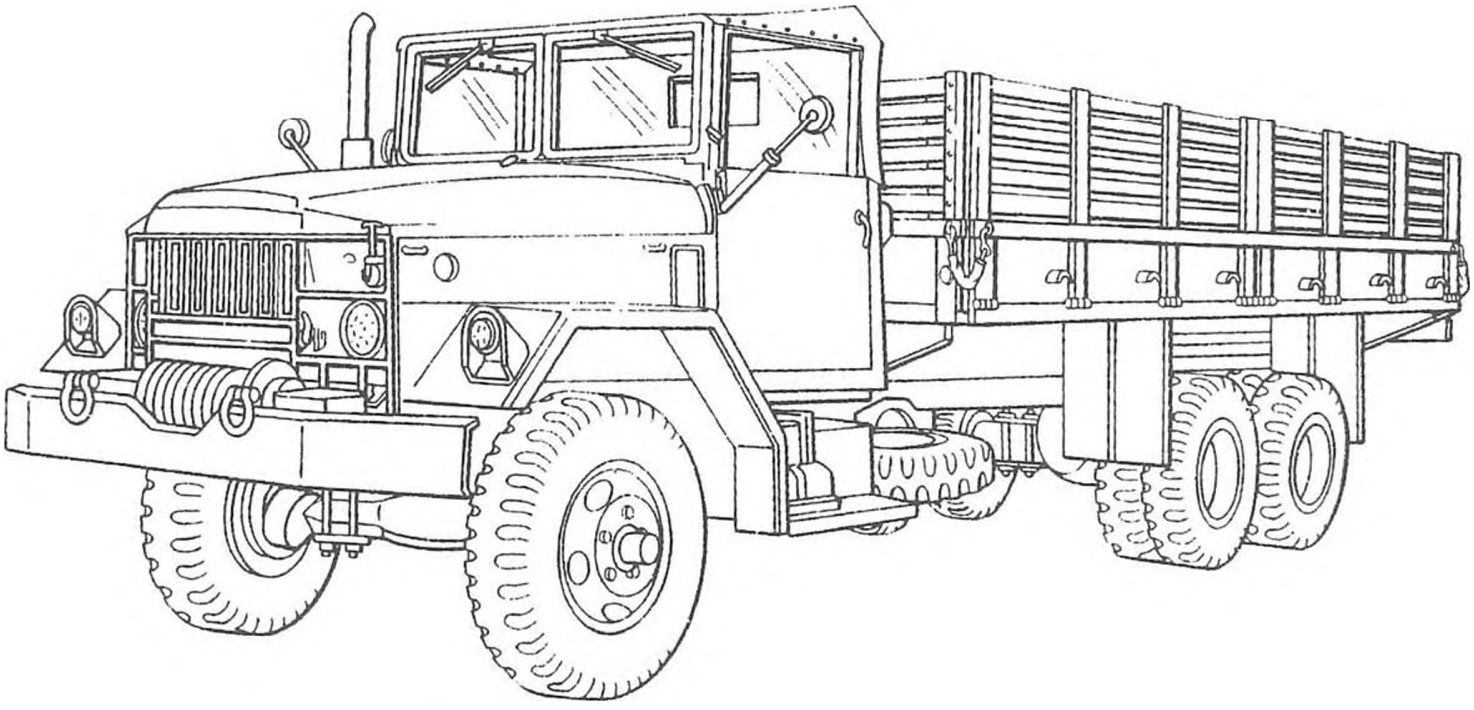
The Killing Machine

I say, "I'm sick of the grunts and their obsession with their M-16s
And the enemies' AK-47s.
My memos and TWIXes killed more soldiers
Than the grunts ever dreamed
Of killing
With their mad minutes, free-fire zones and sweep-and-clears."

"Yeah," says Dan, "but the grunts were killing the enemy.
Your memos were friendly fire."

"Well, yeah. There's that," I say. "But that's the only real difference."

David A. Willson is a Contributing Editor to ***Viet Nam Generation****. David A. Willson, Holman Library, Green River Community College, 12401 SE 320th St., Auburn, WA 98002-3699.*



Spelling Execution

Sean Connolly, 2727Saint Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21218.

E

Scaggs is all bluff. An MP who went airborne and joined us here in Bad Tolz a year ago, he thinks he has to be hard. He snarls at Wes calling him a leg, Wes still a foot soldier newly assigned to the 10th Group, Special Forces, Bad Tolz, Bavaria, and soon to be experiencing (along with PC, Dennis, and the rest of the new crop of legs) the slow dehydration of *pre*airborne training under the dread eye of Spec Five Scaggs. Scaggs hates Scaggs. It's a feeble hate: he's insecure about his name, his Jewish mother and Catholic father, his inability to outwit the army. He figured it all out thinking the army would give him a cushy desk job after it put him through nine months of intelligence training, but, *a la* green weenie, it stuck him in an MP unit in Bamberg where he was forced to use his club instead of his brains. Jumped out of that frying pan and joined the fire down here. When I found out he was a stray from both tribe and pope I called him a Jewlic and offered him my hand and all he could do was stare at me like I was an ice cube on a summer afternoon. Wouldn't laugh when I said my father changed his name from Jonestein to Jones the day he pinned his first yarmulke to his bean. A schmuck, Scaggs doesn't like my dumb jokes, doesn't like the Jew in me to see the Jew in him. I pity him, sure, but how can I feel sorry for someone who's terrified the troopers around here will discover one day what a pussycat he is? Who's playing the ferocious cat now, coming up to Wes' face here in the enlisted men's club, nose to nose, hissing at him and calling him a leg.

Dennis comes up from behind and grabs my fatigue jacket tugging me out onto the veranda. He's waving a sheet of teletype paper in my face and between his profile of sweaty freckles pasted on a kidstuff face and the frantic paper I can see flashes of the Bavarian Alps. Cool and grey they own the sky. They allow the shade to fall across the meadows and I take my smile from the field of dandelions skipping and hopping down along the bumpy valley into the Isar river.

"We're all dead, we're all dead, you've got to get us out of here, Sammy," demands Dennis in his hoarse whisper. Like I had the power; thinks I must just because I'm in charge of collecting their weekly diaries for some new psychological soup 5th Army in Heidelberg is simmering up to prove the army wouldn't leave a foul taste in our mouths if we didn't have to swallow the green weenie every time it decided to give us the shaft. Told these sorry scribes I had their lives all plotted out and it gave them a thrill to think someone was in charge.

"You talk a lot for a dead person."

"You don't know what this is," and he's ferocious to see how stupid I am. The gleam in his eye will prove it and the panic bubbling across his face will throttle it out of me.

"Yes I do."

"No you don't."

"Yes I do."

"No you don't."

"Yes I do."

"No you don't," and he rips it up, crumbles it up, eats it, stares at me, a mad dog, trails of paper hanging from his lips as he freezes in defiance. PC waltzes out humming some tune and slowly jerks a bit of paper away from the mad dog gone lawn ornament.

"Got anything interesting to roll up in this paper, my friend?" he says laying hands all over the ornament's fatigue jacket. "A little something to get us high?" raising an eyebrow.

"Stoned dead in Vietnam," and Dennis breaks up and laughs spinning around in one of his manic circles.

"PC doesn't care for Vietnam," and he gives Dennis a pinch on his cheek. Dennis beams. He loves to see PC sweat.

"Listen up, scumbag," he whispers, "that piece of paper in your hand is part of a levy from the 101st Airborne Division that's going to Vietnam in six months. And guess what they want? Clerks, hundreds and hundreds of airborne clerks," and he reaches out and grabs both of PC's cheeks, "just what you and me and McManus in there will be by the time Scaggs gets finished with us. Aren't you glad you signed up?" and Dennis is seized by the laughter of absurdity.

"Somebody must have forged my signature," sputters PC. He laughs at his cruel fate and hopes to see a way out. "Yes, but who will be administering the levy?"

"Sergeant Curry," and his name evokes a foul odor. Dennis spins around and is seized by another mania and scampers out through the garden to who knows where.

"Maybe not Wes, though," I say quietly.

"How's that? Does that goofy McManus have a way out?"

"Scotty and I were looking at his 201 file and we discovered he needs a little more time in service. Unless he extends for ninety days he's free to leave," and the news sets PC scheming.

"I could use an operative back in Munich," he says and we step into the EM club and watch Wes and Scaggs dancing the dance of farewell-my-foe. They stalk each other's anxiety, moving away inch by inch, denying they fear even fear. Wes possesses the dumb courage of absolute surrender. Out on the field he will do every push up, run every mile, fall into his pool of sweat, do whatever because he thinks all the physical rigor will toughen up some inner strength. Maybe he will extend for the extra ninety days. Some people need the adversity. Unlike Dennis, I never expected him to choose it. His diaries are full of ... well, I'm not supposed to say.

X

Dennis tried it and it went all wrong. The switchblade sprang out of his hand and only Scotty and I saw where it stuck. Just the naked blade sticking like a dart in one of the old wooden legs of Curry's desk. It

exploded in his hand, flew apart and scattered along the floor of the personnel office. Dennis was stupefied, staring at his hand as if it had absorbed the knife. But what startled everybody was the rage Curry flew into, a very weird rage. Never saw anything like it. Not in the street brawls between the gangs of south Philly, not in the drunken, insane ravings of paratroopers trying to kill off the demons in their private war against humanity, never saw anyone gloat on someone's pain the way Curry did on the young sergeant standing at Curry's desk and wringing his hands over what could be done about his fiancee now that Curry told him he was going to the 101st. If they send you, they send you, you gotta go; but it was the way Curry savored the helpless plight of the sergeant that got Dennis riled up.

"Lay off him, Sergeant Pepper," Dennis shouted across the room.

Pepper was Curry's childhood nickname and Dennis could care less if Curry outranked him, like what could he do to him: send him to Vietnam? He had already called him Pepper, asked him the other day after Scaggs ran them around the alps and they sat soaked in sweat in the mess hall, all airborne candidates being equal, Hey, Curry, what's it feel like to be just plain Pepper, no salt? Curry cursed him, threatened to bust him down to nothing if he ever called him Pepper again. But listening to Curry salivating over the young sergeant's worries about his German fiancee, Curry telling him he should be thankful he was leaving her behind, probably a whore, all Krauts were whores, sucking up to GIs just to get a free ride to America where they took every unsuspecting soldier to the cleaners—it would have been laughable if Curry's tone hadn't been sickly sweet.

Curry jumped up from his desk and wobbled over to Dennis and grabbed him by the ears and turned him over across his desk. Dennis spun out and away and threw a roundhouse at him and completely missed and fell onto the floor where he reached into his fatigue jacket pulling out and losing the switchblade. Then Dennis spied the piles of paper on Curry's desk and attacked them like they were Vietnam itself, calling them gooks and grunts. He swept the desk clean. He jumped up and down on every last piece of paper. Curry stared. His face fell apart. He panicked. He lost all muscular control, a mass of blubber trembling across the room to save his papers. He cried out to them, his voice quivering, shaking, I never heard such a rage, even the curses spat out against the gods fought to maintain some kind of dignity, not wallow in pain.

"You're meat in my mouth and I'll spit you out into the stockade syllable by syllable," came out of his disgusting mouth word by lovely word. And while Sergeant Major Jenkins intervened and calmed things down I pulled out the blade from the wooden leg before PC had the chance to notice and inform Curry that someone else might think the same way only preferring to slice up the meat a bit before devouring and spitting it all back out. All of which happened four days ago and I still can't get the sound of Curry's voice out of my ears. Does a slaughter house cry out at night?

E

"You don't throw a gook out of a helicopter," says Sergeant West, who's somewhere between seething and bragging, "you round up a couple and boil them. Then you take them home and serve them family style, you know, the whole fucking village all sitting around," and we all laugh. Getting drunk, been drunk for hours here in the NCO club with Dennis, Sergeants West and Williams, and Scaggs somewhere, all congratulating Dennis and a bunch of others long ago passed out in their new airborne wings, legs no more. Everybody looks drunk. Everybody's face is longer and flatter than a slab of meat and just as raw in the red cocktail lights of the bar. Here comes another round. West and Williams just back from Vietnam wear the iron and cloth bracelets given them by the Moung tribesmen they lived with, routing through the countryside for the dead Viet Cong. Always dead, every dead a red, red eyes, cranberry red faces drinking from the tall red glasses set down before us by the big red bosom of *Fraulein uber alles*. "Now you take Willie, here, he likes to interrogate a gook family from a tree house," and we're laughing at anything now. "First he asks where's the VC. Ain't no VC, says Papasan. Boom, out goes Papasan. No VC, says old Mamasan. Boom, out goes old Mamasan. VC everywhere, says younger Mamasan holding onto her daughter, Babysan, all of fifteen. Boom, out goes younger Mamasan. Only thing left is Babysan and Willie, and pretty soon you see that tree house going boom boom, boom boom, the whole night long, yeah, Willie ain't no dummy," and we're falling off our chairs into a pool of red tears.

"You don't want to take them higher than twenty, maybe thirty feet," says Williams. He clears his throat to let the bare facts out. "The higher up you go the more abstract the ground appears. They loose the fear of falling." He sits tall in the chair and leans his smooth red face back and takes in the sure slow red from the tall red glass. He's as calm as baby fat.

"I'm gonna kill me a gook," vows Dennis. His face is a boiling red sun.

"Door gunner," says West. "If you're going over with the 101st, then apply for door gunner. It's kill or be killed."

"The gooks in the countryside are the niggers of Asia," says Williams. "They don't eat pussy," and everyone laughs but me. I pour my drink over my head but it doesn't help. Feeling sickly.

"What's the matter there, Jones," says West, "you feeling some sympathy for the enemy? Don't. You do, you lose."

"When everybody's nigger you win for sure."

"Yeah, the winning's coming up," and I stumble out of my chair and weave into the men's room. The light's a flashbulb and I lurch against the wall and make it to the sink and throw up in one horrible gush. There's Scaggs sitting on the floor next to the urinal passed out, maybe not. He opens his eyes and looks up at me and I look away. I wash up and leave the club. Outside the afternoon light is too thin, too worn, like it was yesterday's left over for

today. Or maybe I'm just remembering the wan light left over in Scaggs' eyes.

C

"No, don't, please."

"Sammy baby," she whispers from down around my thighs, kissing me, "I want to please you, give you a nice warm kiss in my mouth." She looks up at me, pleading to please. It's a weird look for her; not the old wild look of fun and games, not those lusty eyes half shut from seeing nothing but absolute creams and dreams. This look is a different animal, a plea to be beaten or not to be beaten, hard to tell. Her rough face and soft green eyes look out to hear 'submit bitch'. Maybe that's what she wants but I've never been the man with a whip.

"Sandy, com'ere," I say sliding down, pulling her up, "I want to be inside you," meeting, fusing. I want to cry out in her arms. I want to hold her in the raw autumn sun blazing in through her bedroom window. I want to melt in the light across the bed and we do in a sweat bath pouring out from everywhere. She's happy, pleased, pleased I'm back in Philadelphia on leave on the way to the 101st at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

A couple of years ago I thought we'd get married; now I'm not too sure. Too many changes in too short a time, she and I seem ... The phone rings and she moans, groans, curses, jumps up from the bed and answers it. She's not much to look at, a lumpy olive dumpling, but who am I to complain. She's got the sharp Jewish eye: nothing gets by and nothing gets through.

"... right there on the copy desk ... you find it ... yeah ... oh, yeah ... when ... in Center City ... that's only a couple of hours from now ... that'd be terrific ... my mighty soldier boy ... I think he'd love it ... okay ... bye ... sure ... bye bye ... you too ... byyyyyeeee." She plunges back into bed and kisses me all over like a puppy. "That was my editor," she says. She works as a copy editor at *Philadelphia Magazine*, a job that's made her a different kind of woman: big, round glasses, hair cut short, clothes full of wild colors, not the Sandy I took to the senior prom. "He wants to have an early dinner with us at a restaurant in Center City, a new place, The Encore. He'd like to get some impressions from you on a war protest that's scheduled for late afternoon. I think it'll be fun."

"That's not my kind of people," I say, draping my arm over my eyes, feeling sleepy.

"What kind of people?" she asks, nestling beside me, drawing circles through my pubic hair with her fingernail.

"Editors and war protesters."

"What about me, Sammy?"

"You and me have been people since grade school." I yawn, slipping away. "Maybe we'll even get married some day."

"Some day," circling in on it.

I dream I wake up in the desert sun. The light is a cool heat and she has me where she wants me. She's all slurps, going head on as if it were some great prize, some new cosmetic for a creamy complexion. It hurts slowly, a pain for the sad and lost.

U

Stew bursts in through the back door of Awards and Decorations with the morning mail. He flashes his dairy smile and the cool fall day beams from his face. How he does this it is impossible to say. Maybe he was born in a cave next to a cow. Unlike Uncle Milty he'll never know a pimple. Even Uncle Milty's suit had pimples, the same one he wore on every social occasion, cold weather or hot, and it was the color of dust balls. Since he rarely bathed he smelled somewhere between glue and old shoes. He hung wallpaper, then sold it wholesale from behind a counter he fashioned from old and flattened cardboard boxes. He had a big boat of a car stacked with cardboard front and back and when he came to visit he would squeeze in and out of every chair and every cushion on the sofa looking for a seat as comfy as cardboard. He apologized to the furniture for dirtying it. He searched his soul out loud apologizing for his odor and bad habits. But he never found his spot until we calmed him down, saying, Please Uncle Milty, Please Milty, for God's sake, for our sake, please sit in one place. And then he would apologize for everything, for his bad breath, his pimples, on and on for ten minutes or so and, apologetically, he would nod off to sleep. Peace at last came over his face and there sure is lots of it in Stew's sleepy face. It barely registers surprise or lust as it catches sight of a porno photo accidentally slipping out from a newspaper in Curry's hand as he breezes by. Accidentally on purpose: Curry turns his face toward Stew as he bends down and scoops it up, calling it trash and ripping it up, the word trash extended from his long lips with the hope of an invitation. Couldn't tell exactly but the glossy seemed to show a fondness for people in pain and chains. Stew runs back out into the cool grey day whistling in the dark for light years to come.

T

"Gin," says Stew slowly fanning out the cards on the wooden bench. He grins and looks at SSG Simonton, a mammoth black Buddha. "Thanks for that ten of diamonds, sarg."

"Had to get rid of it. Felt your gin coming on. You only got three points out of me this time," he chuckles. Sy, as he told us to call him, talks a chewy piece of meat, savoring each word. His eyes pop out like a frog's. He palms a dollar bill across the bench to Stew. "Mize well use 'em up. No way these are going to be legal tender once we get in country, no sir."

"No way," agrees Sideways, a skinny black sergeant with a face gone soft and long. He folds a bill in half and covers it with his cards and hands them to Stew, his deal. We've been playing for over an hour and I haven't believed a word they've said. I don't mistrust the words, I mistrust the obvious way these two are tossing them around. The

devious love the obvious, saying it over and over again like you hear people on the streets playing with a cliche or stock phrase, repeating it until it sounds weird, emphasizing the wrong syllable to make believe it's a code, words just practice for the tongue and lips working on getting something for nothing, maybe a lick of something here, or a big kiss over there, giving out a smile real nice to hear come hither and stuff your face.

"That's right," says Stew dealing, "I forgot that we'd be getting funny money in Nam."

"Script," says Sideways.

A captain comes into the embarkation room and blows a whistle. He calls out names and numbers. Soldiers stand up and shout out their seat number and shuffle out the front doors. Then a few hundred more file into the room, sit on the benches and wait to be called. Outside they're packed into a plane, hundreds of them sitting in canvas slings for twelve hours or more with no place to move around. Wes got us on a cargo jet instead, the four of us and three from the stockade we haven't met yet. We'll be sitting in jeeps and trucks, can move around, stretch out on top of the shipping containers, talk to the pilots, play cards. Like we've been doing all afternoon, Sy and Sideways coming along after an hour asking if we wanted to play cards, gamble a little. At first we said no, but the waiting wore us down and we said yes as long as we kept it friendly. Not much money's been won or lost and we've kept the bills out of sight. When momentarily in view their money is quite the sight: bills folded carefully, all facing in the same direction, no tattered edges, small denominations on the outside, the larger twenties, fifties, hundreds buried and carried around like a waiter's cash crop. Or a bookie's.

"So Sy," I say fishing, "what'll you be missing most in Nam: sports, maybe the track?" tucking the ten of diamonds next to jack of same. Nice shuffle, Stew.

"I don't miss nothing when I'm in country, Sammy boy."

"Is this your second time around?" asks Stew.

"Third."

"Third," I'm surprised, "what's the attraction?"

"Got myself a little whorehouse over there, a good woman, too."

"Little? Tsstsst, tsstsst, tsstsst," cackles Sideways, "it's the onliest drive-in whorehouse I ever saw."

"A drive-in?" chuckles Stew. "Do you serve hamburgers and French fries?"

"Not quite," says Sy. "But we have beer and hoagies. You two will have to come 'round some time," and he digs out two calling cards from his fat wallet and hands them to us. They read:

SY's PLACE
Bien Hoa's Finest Drive In

And all bought and paid for in Yankee currency?

I

"But who'll bury the body?" asks Martin Martin.

"Where's PC?" demands Dennis.

"He's not interested now that he's gotten rich selling greenbacks to some Chinaman in Saigon," says Stew. He grins. " 'Sides, he's Curry's buddy over here. You kill Curry and PC'll turn you in—unless he loses at poker and gets too stoned to remember who or where he is, like most nights."

"You don't want to kill Curry anymore," I say dealing the cards on top of Stew's footlocker. The four of us are goofing off playing Euchre and drinking beer in the back of our hooch on a sunny afternoon at Bien Hoa air base in Vietnam. The heat and sun bring back those summer days when a bunch of us from south Philly rented a dump on South Carolina Avenue in Atlantic City for a week, beer for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, always a card game or two, the girls coming and going mostly for laughs, only here you have to swig down a can in two gulps before it turns hot. "He's just a pervert, like the rest of the people who go down to Maya's mansion."

"Dis gust ting," mouths Martin Martin. "A real *prev*ert."

"Don't you care that Curry fired Kim from the NCO club?" asks Dennis with a silly sneer. I glare at him and his laughter tumbles out. He falls on the concrete floor sputtering for breath. I pick up my can of beer and start pouring the last gulp in his face. "Poor Sammy and his true love. They can't hold hands and smooch behind the motor pool any more. Little lost Kim, all right, all right, I'll stop ... stop it," and he bats the empty can from my hand. He plunges his head into the swill of ice and beers in the galvanized tub. He growls and plows his head around and the ice cubes bubble up and cascade after him as he flies up out of there. For a moment he's caught up in an elastic comet of starry ice and cold innocence, his face beaming out an expression of sweet revenge. He grabs a beer from the tub and turns ferocious. "I'm going to kill him, somebody. What else are we over here for?"

"Why don't you come out to one of the villages we're rebuilding," I say knowing he won't listen. "Once you get to know these people..."

"Find 'em, rape 'em, kill 'em, and rebuild 'em, yeah that's what we're here for, Sammy. You and Scaggs found any gooks to make over into Jewlics yet?"

"Well," says Stew, "get your ass on out there and stop stewing about Curry."

"Shut up," and Dennis snatches up his cards and bids spades out of turn. "They won't let me out of finance."

"You start messing with everyone's pay and they'll let ..."

"They'll what, you farmer's turd? No, they won't send me to the boonies, they'll send me to Long Bihn Jail. They've already promised me that."

"To be or one, one be, that is the question," says Martin.

"C'mon old buddy," I say, "forget it. Play your cards."

"Forget it!" and Dennis bends up his cards and stares at us in disbelief.

"You're not serious about killing anyone," says Stew and a smile eases over his face. The whole thing's been a joke, he's saying, let's all have the last laugh on ourselves. No way, GI. Dennis throws his cards in Stew's smiling face and jumps over the footlocker and disappears behind the curtain, banging out of the hooch. For a moment Stew looks mean enough to whip him and I think he could.

"What counts is body counts, says President LBJ."

"If President Kennedy hadn't been assassinated we'd still be back at the 10th drinking beer out on the veranda," says Stew. "And if Bobby Kennedy runs against Johnson like he says he will, then he's got my vote."

"I guess we can play three handed Euchre."

"That bluffer," says Stew examining Dennis' cards, "he'd of never made spades with this hand."

O

"What are you doing way out here?"

"It's pay day, dummy," says Dennis. He looks wasted and the fire in his eyes burns to destroy. "We're up the road at the 137th ..." and his mouth drops open at the sight of the bomb craters. They've pocked up the earth with their enormous pits devastating about a third of the village and opening up a gorge in the rain forest spilling down the lizard tail of the mountain range. They wound Dennis for not having inflicted them himself. He scares me. I can't have him raving and gawking around at the villagers treating them like the babysans and papasans back at Bein Hoa. Here you don't pat them on the head and make jokes out of them. They're centuries apart, these peasants. Even their hammers, their bow saws — all their tools are right out of the feudal days and it's taken me a month of working and rebuilding with them to get their trust. They don't give up, thousands of years have taught them that. I stand up from my rice bowl telling Dong Hoa and the rest of the crew that I'll be back and nod to Dennis to walk over to the fence we built to keep people from falling into the craters at night.

"They're the ugliest people I've ever seen," snickers Dennis. "How can you stand working with them? Which one are you fucking?"

"Shut up."

"Saint Sammy," he laughs, "out in the boonies with the country poor," and suddenly his eyes burn bright at the size and depth of the craters. "Jesus Christ, will you look at that," and his entire head gawks poking out from his shoulders like a pigeon pecking out at the sight of some crumb to eat.

"How did you get out here?" He takes a box of cigarettes from his fatigue jacket and snatches out a joint.

"Jeep. Parked on the other side of those huts."

"Don't light that up here. Come on."

"Don't you want to get high?"

"Not now. I've got work to do."

"They've got steaks for chow up at the 137th, or have you gone vegetarian like Scaggs did when they put him back into the MPs?"

"I'll eat a steak. You bring me back in about an hour?" and we start walking toward his jeep.

"Sure," he says with a sly smile. Then he laughs. "Don't you believe me?" He laughs at what he sees in me these days. He lights up the joint and we get into the jeep.

"Yeah, I believe you. But I don't like you snickering at me."

"Don't be a fucking schmuck, Sammy," and we drive off down the narrow road. More it's a wide footpath and the bush and palm and fern brush up against the jeep. We come to a clearing and the path jumps up to a dirt road. A Vietnamese man is standing on the other side of the road. He runs up to us carrying a chicken and a bundle shouting at us to stop. A group of people come out of the trees and chase after us. Dennis yells at the man to get away from the jeep but the man runs up and grabs on to the tail gate. "Get off," and Dennis hits the brakes, snatches up his M-16 and points it at him. The fire in his eyes seizes him and he slams a round in the chamber, aims, and I smash it up over his head as the round pops off. I slap him in the face.

"Not on my turf, you don't, buddy," and I jump out of the jeep and start walking back to the village.

"Fuck you, Sammy. Fuck you. Saint Sammy sucks."

N

"This hour has no name," says Dong Hoa. He's been saying it all night. He says it like a chant, saying it in a flat, dead tone, saying it until he tells himself to be quiet. "No speak. Be dark." And the dark slowly comes in the same way it has come the last three nights. It seems to push us away from each other to our separate corners in the hut to squat on the bare ground and listen, listen hard. We listen to each other listening. In the dead of night the laughter begins. It creeps up after the sobbing and moaning have worn themselves out. The cries can't go on any more and the laughter starts. Then the flames leap up behind the trees and their grey shadows lick along the ground and lie down with the women and children. The air turns clammy. It carries the laughter and the flames and it leaves us feeling sickly.

Yesterday we went to the 137th MPs to ask if they'd investigate the laughter and the flames. The sergeant asked us, Sergeant Mitchell, he asked us, "During what hour?" And that's when Dong Hoa said it first, "Has no name," brushing aside Mitchell's question, brushing the pen from his hand poised above some form and turning Mitchell's expression of bored inquiry into eager anger. But it convinced him, even though he said it was probably some party the 101st's admin row was throwing during its field exercises here in the boonies, even though Mitchell was leaving Nam and retiring in three days, because when Dong Hoa said it again, "Hour has no name, no war name, only police do," Mitchell creased up

his old black skin like one old man were saluting another and said, "Okay, see you at first light."

The first cock crows at the premonition of light. How he knows is beyond me. We start up from our corners and gather in the silence. We see from memory and slip out into the tall wet grass, the tassels licking at our brows and ears. At the road Mitchell's face is a piece of coal with faint embers for eyes darting around and then staring off toward the bush where we could see a rosy glow rising behind the trees as if it were the dawn.

"Don't like what I've been hearing," his voice inhales.

"What's that?"

"Ever hear a chicken get its throat cut without a fight?"

"I don't ..." and his hand squeezes my shoulder and he shifts his eyes to mine and I see something I've never seen in a man's face before, not even in the ones whose eyes glaze over slowly in pain and fear, dying from wounds whose blood never reveals itself. As if Mitchell died but the life in him refused to leave because it got caught in his throat and he couldn't pronounce himself dead.

"I never heard it but I know it's no damn good," and he juts out a hand toward two of his men across the road appearing, disappearing. "We're all set."

I never held a man's hand before but I place mine in Dong Hoa's as we inch up a path behind Mitchell. We stop, we breathe, we let the night pass and move on again. It's a weird sensation: crouching close to the earth, feet barely moving through the dirt and grass, I get the impression that I'm not moving, that the earth is, that it is moving my feet, me the effect and the earth the cause of it alll—some inevitable force demanding recognition and retribution at every step. It's a horror taking over me and it invests me with a lack of will. We crawl into a smell, something hot and sweet, something roasting over a fire and its familiarity eases the horror. The familiarity lasts as long as the first whiff, though, and we crouch down on our knees and elbows and the sweat pours out of me, more from the dark and fear than the heat. The smell turns thicker and I can taste it: sweet with a sickly edge, maybe just tasting my own fear.

We don't move until the dark turns grey. The fires in their little camp develop into a black and white photograph, the white grain of the four or five men sitting, standing, moving from around a black 55 gallon drum above a white fire toward a black hunk of meat on a spit. All around them the dark seeps into a black forest whose treetops catch the first silver light. Someone stirs up the drum and he starts to laugh. The laughter whimpers and whines in delight; it cackles and snickers with glee; it weeps and cries as lovers do and it makes all of these sounds at once. It must be the laughter of the mad and it is impossible to know why. The earth roots us and lifts us into leviation as the grey light turns paler, falling across the faces on the heads the laughing man dumps from a basket into the drum, the water bubbling over the top onto the fire below, hissing, steaming among the stacks of other heads on the ground all staring in crazy directions like a dumpster stuffed full of blind men. A faint cry leaps from my mouth the moment something reaches up from the earth and clutches me. One of them jumps up and tries to make us out but can't and bolts toward the darker trees. No, one of the MPs smashes him across the face with the butt of his rifle, then steps into the light and freezes. It's Scaggs, his face trembling, retching.

"Dead or alive," standing up on Mitchell's command, all of us converging on the camp and the faint cry won't stay in my mouth, won't stop trembling out in sorry syllables even though a pair of hands from the earth are pulling my mouth apart from opposite directions, won't stop when the hands reach down into the throat and throttle the same cry it won't let stay in the throat, won't stop when the hands reach out to choke Scaggs from retching and shivering above the naked man bowed over his little altar of burning heads, won't stop when the hands won't let me move another step, won't shake Scaggs into stopping the naked man who lifts a chary baby from a rack above the burning heads, won't stop the head of another man bobbing in the naked man's lap, won't stop Scaggs from crying and retching and staring at the naked man plunging his teeth into the baby's legs and hips, tearing away the flesh with his teeth like hot corn from the cob, won't stop me from knowing the naked man is Sergeant Curry, won't stop the other man's head as it moves up and down along Curry's penis as fast as Curry devours the baby into shreds and chunks, won't stop as Scaggs stares into oblivion and falls on his rifle and shoots himself, shoots himself, shoots himself ...

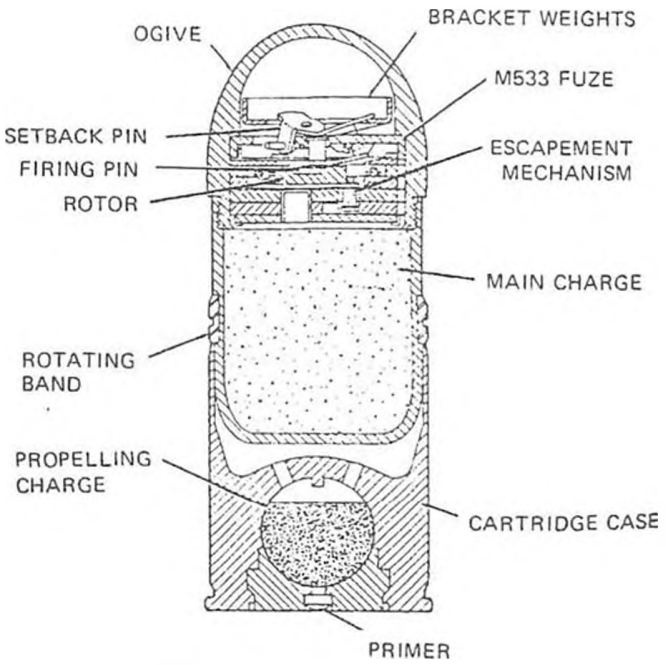


Figure 1104-7. 40mm Grenade

Poetry by Victor H. Bausch

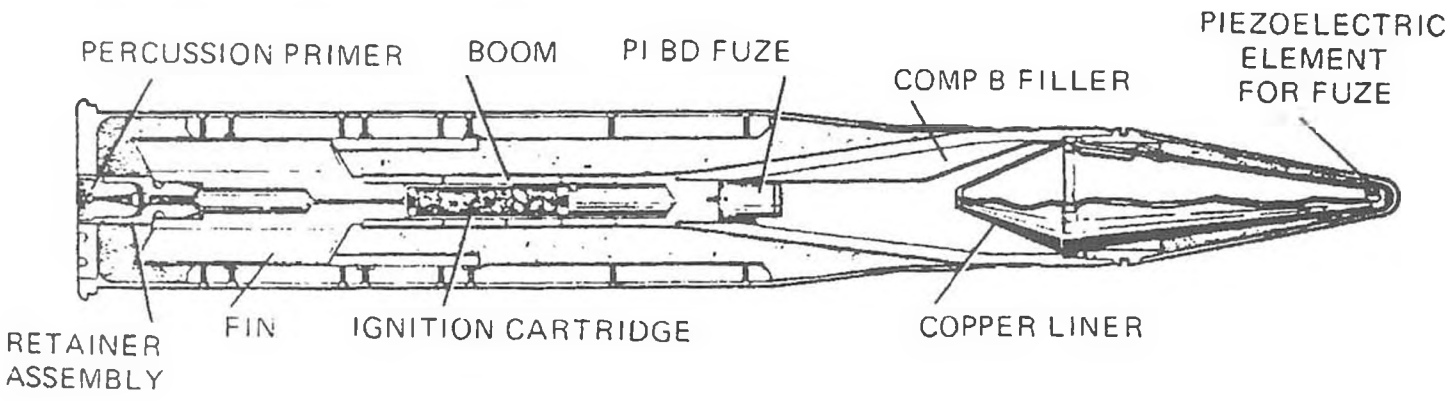
White Mice

We're in a convoy
stopped at a narrow bridge
while two MPs and a couple
of South Vietnamese Police
argue and gesture. It's monsoon
season; we're getting drenched
in a heavy downpour.
The White Mice are on one side
and the MPs on the other. I see
one of the White Mice
motion for a deuce-and-a-half
towing two trailers of ammo,
filled full of mess equipment,
and two cooks, to cross the bridge.
Everything happens in slow motion
as if it has been orchestrated,
and this is the final take.
The Six-By slides into a rice
paddy, turns over from the weight
of the ammo trailers. What looks
like no more than two to three feet
of water must seem like an ocean
to those trapped. The driver emerges,
a couple of minutes later,
gasping for breath. I don't see the cooks.
Disbelief turns to anger. I curse
the White Mice's incompetence.
Two cooks drown in a ditch meant
to feed a few hundred peasants.
What the hell kind of justice is this?

Buddy System

Frank calls today, says The Buzzard
checked out from a drug overdose.
I ask if Tony, Wild Bill, Ramiriz,
Odom, and Nichols know. That's all
that's left of us now. We congratulate
each other for surviving The Nam, so far.
Who would have guessed Sutton would die
of AIDS two years ago while directing
a production of *Strange Snow*?
Who would have guessed Max would drink
himself to death, survive three marriages,
have two children born without a brain,
one born with web feet, lose more jobs
than a company downsizing in the middle
of the night? Who would have believed
Nate Longley would be killed in a freak accident,
a beam giving way on a high rise 55 stories up?
Turner was predictable. When he held up
that branch of Bank of America and was obliterated
by the SWAT team, we weren't too surprised.
Yeah, Frank says, Life's a goddamn S&D mission.
You come back from getting your ass kicked
in an ambush and years later you still dwell
on the things that were significant then,
how you would have done the mission differently.
Now twenty years later, after normalization,
you go back to Vietnam on company business,
help establish a capitalistic base in what once was
a communist stronghold. Frank, I ask,
what the hell was that war all about?

Victor H. Bausch, 165 Dolphin Circle, Marina, CA 93933.



Fair Game

Carolyn Thorman, 325 Silver Rd., Berkeley Springs, WV 25411.

Deer season at Fort Morgan had started that day at dawn. Colonel Cabot rose from his desk and laid his glasses on the map of the base, five hundred acres of West Virginia mountain land. This was his third year at Morgan and so far his MPs had managed to keep the deer in the woods and joggers out, so the hunters wouldn't shoot them. It was, however, in the words of Chairman Mao, a protracted struggle.

The Colonel's study was on the second floor wing of the renovated Revolutionary War farmhouse always assigned to the commanding officer. The smell of coffee drifted from downstairs. Lee, Cabot's son, whistled softly to radio jazz. The Colonel reached for his BDU cap, then paused. General Hatcher would be dressed to the teeth in Class 'A's. Hatcher chaired the promotion board. Cabot was up for Brigadier. "Up, or out," he said aloud. He ran his finger along the lines of the jungle pattern on the crown. Then he slapped it against his palm. Battle Dress Uniform was more fitting for a garrison commander, he decided. For this one, anyway. He headed downstairs, hat in hand.

Lee sat at the kitchen table.

"It's early for you," Cabot said.

Lee motioned to *Elements of Legal Practice* at his elbow. "Haven't slept."

Cabot opened the cupboard and took out a cereal bowl. Despite his low salt diet his body felt sluggish and stiff.

"Another damn deer season?" Lee asked. "I thought I heard a shot."

Cabot peeled back the lid of a box of Bran-O. "I brought in some extra MPs from Fort Meyers. Half our own were hit by the downsizing. The Army's going to hell." He set the cereal on the table and pulled out a chair. "I cordoned off the playground and restricted the joggers to the paved road."

Lee slid him the jar of wheat germ.

"It won't do me any good," Cabot said.

"Solid thiamin."

"They'll jog in the woods anyway."

Lee carried his empty cup to the sideboard. The wall behind the Brew-Matic was a gallery of framed snapshots: Lee in a stroller in Saigon; Ami, Cabot's ex-wife, with her parents dressed in their Vietnamese shupans; Cabot, Ami and Lee, their faces blurred by the grainy kodachrome of a military family passport photo, enlarged and mounted in clear plastic; Ami, one arm around nine-year-old Lee, her other hand resting on a ski-pole, laughing, the white peaks of the Alps in the distance.

Lee blew on his coffee as he walked back to the table. "Last year the MPs gave warning tickets to your runaway runners."

"Major Bonner's bright idea." Cabot tipped the one-percent over his cereal. "Out of bounds this year and the soldier gets a suspension without pay."

"You can't suspend a jogging wife or kid."

"The suspension goes to the sponsoring soldier."

"Let me get this straight. One person, say, a wife, commits the crime. And another gets punished?"

"You got it."

"That's forcing one person to control another. That's called—"

"Correct," Cabot held up his index finger, "a man's responsible for his country, for his unit, for his own."

"For everyone he owns?" Lee lowered the sugar bowl. "Owns?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

The boy wouldn't let it go, would he? Accusing Cabot of abuse of power, megalomania, of having tied Ami so closely to him he had driven her away.

Lee rose and picked up his book. "I have an eight o'clock exam." The crease of his khakis was razor sharp and Cabot suddenly saw Ami at the ironing board showing the child a press cloth.

O-eight-hundred, Cabot almost said. Then caught himself. Push the army lifestyle down his throat and Lee could move to the dorm as he often threatened. Cabot twisted his fist lightly into the palm of his other hand. "Knock it dead, kid."

The water tower loomed over the installation like a thick-legged spider. Cabot circled the post library and crossed the ballfield. A green pickup with US ARMY stenciled on its door pulled alongside. The MP wound down the window. "Just a heads-up, sir. Two suspensions already. Enlisted jogging in the field beside your house."

"You've herded the deer into the woods?"

"We're working on them."

The sun struggled to escape a low cloud cover. A breeze bit cold, and Cabot fastened the top button of his jacket. A row of trucks sat in front of the motor pool, each bed covered by a tarp. Underneath sat surplus commodities, cartons of baby food procured during Desert Storm for Operation Restore, a good-will mission to civilians in Kuwait. Its disposition was on the agenda of today's briefing with the general.

Hatcher: head of Cabot's MACOM. They had served together in Vietnam. When Cabot married Ami, Hatcher recommended he be chaptered out. "Gone native," he said., an accusation that proved not to be a military crime.

A sharp spasm in Cabot's right side caught him off guard. He took a deep breath and quickened his pace. Ulcers, gall bladder, whatever, would probably show up next month at his over-fifty physical. Meanwhile, next week his file went to the three member promotion board. Up or out. Not an option. A threat. With a pension that would hardly cover alimony, let alone Lee's tuition. And the downsizing would be Hatcher's hunting license.

Cabot strode past the last rig. DOD had recommended that all surplus commodities at the installation level be allocated to Somalia. But yesterday Chaplain McGee had cornered Cabot in the gym.

"WIC?" Cabot had asked, bearing down on the handlebars of the Exercycle.

"Women, infants, and children. Free baby food from the state. Most of our enlisted families get it."

Cabot raised his head. "Welfare?"

McGee stuffed his sweatshirt into an Adidas bag. "We don't call it that." He wiped his brow with the back of his hand. "Look, can't you fix it so our troops get the stuff that's on the trucks?"

As soon as Cabot had returned to his office he drafted a justification to divert the surplus from Somalia and to retain it on post. The new military, humanitarian aid, all good to go. But the Army took care of its own, first. Halfway through the last paragraph he thought about Hatcher. Would he be bucking the general? But the old man never seemed to care where materiel wound up—just so consumables were disposed of fast.

Cabot bent into the wind that howled across the parking lot of the headquarters building. He crossed the cement portico and swung open the door. Rather than wait for the elevator he took the stairs, then wondered why. With the General's briefing, followed by a drink with him at the house and lunch together at the officers' club, the day would be shot.

An hour later, seated between Captains Reilly and Burke, Cabot reached for the folder labeled INFANT HICAL FIVE. Hatcher, at the head of the table, glanced out the window. "Venison. Wish I had along my 30-30. Bet you itching to blast them, Colonel.," Hatcher's speech pure Atlanta, the lilt at the end turning each sentence into a question.

"Duck's my game," Cabot replied.

Major Lerner, the new internist and head of the Medical Treatment Center smiled at Cabot across the table. He thought of the pain in his gut, the possibility of a GI series, and pretended a sudden interest in the date on the folder. Lerner motioned to her briefing packed. "The allocation of the baby food, and we can wind this up."

"DOD's earmarked the stuff for Somalia," Hatcher said.

"Recommendation only, sir," Cabot said. "My plan's for on-post distribution. Some of our enlisted are income-eligible for free food from the state. And they're taking it," he added.

All at once the room seemed too warm, too small.

"Welfare?" Captain Reilly asked.

"We don't call it that," Cabot said stiffly. The sound of marching footsteps and a drill sergeant's voice sounded in the distance. Why me? Cabot wondered. Who has to bring it to attention? A week before my file comes up? He pictured the trucks parked beside the motor pool, and nodded slightly.

"Army pay's not the Army's fault," Captain Burke pointed out. "It's Congress."

"We can't allow—" Hatcher groped for a word, "sentiment, sentiment to affect our mission. You do support Operation African Rescue, Colonel." Hatcher wound off his glasses. "Don't you?"

The signs: Cabot knew them well. The old man digging in his heels because he was getting it from the top. Back off, Cabot told himself. We're not talking a life supply of food here, only a case or so per soldier. Back off.

You can't, his mind answered. A garrison commander is responsible for every soldier on his post plus the baby and the wife even if brass doesn't give support or even give a damn. Suddenly he could hear Lee's voice, "Soldiers? The people you own?"

"My justification to MACOM's already written, sir," he heard himself say. "We can fax it this afternoon."

Hatcher slowly raised his coffee, his eyes never leaving the Colonel's face.

Cabot straightened and stared at the wall behind Major Lerner. The air smelled of cedar furniture polish. His twill BDUs all at once seemed as heavy as canvas. No one spoke, but the words "deep shit" spread across the mahogany table like oil spilled on glass.

"How would you distribute it on-post?" Lerner suddenly asked.

"Chaplain McGee," Cabot replied.

She turned to Hatcher. "There have been a few failure-to-thrives here. If we don't give it out—," she tipped her hand back and forth, "Morgan could be accused of not taking care of its own."

Hatcher had the rank. But a medical opinion bore weight. The general glanced at his nails. He lowered his hand and lifted the recycling brochure and studied its cover. The footsteps and the voice of the drill sergeant were back, closer this time. Hatcher raised his head and looked at Lerner over his glasses. "Add an addendum to Colonel Cabot's justification," he said. "Something about prevention."

A few minutes later Hatcher and Cabot stood at the coffee urn. "Your kid out of law school yet?"

Cabot felt the ice behind the General's smile. "First year. He'll be home when you come by before lunch."

Major Bonner and the NCOI, scheduled to escort the General through the recycling operation, appeared in the doorway. Hatcher lifted his Class A windbreaker from the rack and spoke over his shoulder. "How many of your enlisted do you have on welfare, anyway, Colonel?" He smiled slightly. "And to think Fort Morgan was up for the Community of Excellence award."

Score one, Cabot thought. You son-of-a-bitch.

At Twelve-hundred, Cabot, on his way home, passed a hunter. A civilian, judging from the Day-Glo vest strapped over his camouflage jacket. BDUs—bought from Army surplus. Cabot shook his head. A game. They pretend killing means what it used to mean, Goddamn it, BDUs. Guys who protested the Vietnam war, who played the numbers in the Sixties, wear uniforms now to shoot deer. Why? A game, echoed in Cabot's mind. He glanced down at his own combat boots.

Mrs. Stotler had vacuumed the living room and set out Carr's crackers and freeze-dried cashews. Cabot had not asked her to fill the ice-bucket. She was a local hire and he suspected that drinking before noon—or any time for that matter—would offend. He drew two of Ami's Waterford on-the-rocks glasses from the breakfront. She had bought them in Shannon on their flight back from Berlin. Cabot held the cut glasses to the light. For Ami the move from Germany to Fort Huachuga had been the last straw. He hadn't done anything wrong. Nor had she. The talent for military life was simply God-given, that's all. Now she lived in San Francisco where her brother ran an import-export business. At first there had been the

barrette in the drum of the dryer, the meat loaf recipe cut from the newspaper among the screwdrivers in his tool box. After ten years, the loss remained, but, Cabot believed, had been successfully cordoned off.

The kitchen door slammed and Mrs. Stotler's voice mingled with Lee's.

"How was the exam?" Cabot called out.

"Piece of cake." Lee dropped his books on the coffee table, caught his father's eye, and moved them to the rolltop desk. "Man, you look wasted."

"There was a briefing."

"Hatchet?"

"We locked horns over what's good for troops and what looks good for command. He backed command."

"What did you expect?"

Cabot poured a finger of Black Label into a glass and drank it neat. First the rush, then a sharp contraction as his liver hardened to the assault.

The doorbell chimed. Mrs. Stotler showed Hatcher in. The General rubbed his hands together and looked around the room. "A new lithograph? The shadows are pure Heinrich."

"It's been there," Cabot replied. "The usual?"

Hatcher nodded and watched Cabot break the seal of the bottle of Jack Daniels.

Lee held out a tray holding brie and a knife. "Sir?"

"How's school?" Hatcher asked, lowering a slice of cheese onto a napkin.

Suddenly there was the roar of a motor, the squeal of brakes and footsteps on the gravel, then the sound of boots on the wooden porch. Cabot set his glass on a coaster and shouted toward the kitchen. "I'll get it."

Two MPs stood at the door. Cabot returned their salutes. "Deer, sir." The soldier pointed to the front yard and Cabot caught the flash of a white tail. "They ran up here and we still got stray joggers behind your—"

"Request permission to enter your property," the other MP said, "and herd them back to the hunting area, sir."

Hatcher, laughing, came up and stood at Cabot's elbow. "Those fuckers just figured themselves the cushiest deal on the whole damn installation." He downed the last of his drink and turned back to the living room.

"Good to go, sir?" The MP asked.

Cabot smiled and was about to raise his hand when Lee gripped his arm. "We need to talk,."

"Wait," Cabot told the soldiers. He could see Hatcher standing at the french doors overlooking the garden.

"Don't." Lee's voice was strained. Pleading, Cabot would have said if he hadn't known him better. "Don't drive them away." In the dim light his eyes shone bright as onyx."

Cabot nodded toward the living room. "Lower your voice."

"You, you say a man's responsible for his own."

"The herd's to be in the woods. My order," Cabot whispered.

"Change it."

"I'm paid to keep order."

"Responsible for his own," Lee repeated.

Hatcher was rapping on the glass. "Hey," he shouted. "There's three, no, count four here eating something. Rose bushes. You could reach right out and blast them."

Cabot's jaw tightened. "I know my responsibility." He stepped closer to Lee. "Which, by the way, means providing for you."

"I can't see those MPs," Hatcher called out.

Cabot's forehead felt clammy. He regretted the scotch, but desperately wanted more. He reached for the doorknob and felt Hatcher's breath on his neck.

"What are those soldiers of yours doing?"

Cabot brushed past the general. "A map, sir. I have one upstairs." He took the steps two at a time.

The map was spread over his desk where he had left it that morning—his glasses across the Cheat River. In the corner of the legend the cartographer had drawn four directional arrows. The lines blurred before his eyes. If he withdrew the MPs? Everyone in the United States Army would find out. And no member of the promotion board in his right mind would buck Hatcher to defend a fool. There was alimony and tuition. Where would an over-fifty Combat Support Medical Logistics Administrator find work? He lifted the map and slowly folded in along the crease.

Then he pictured the MPs in four-wheel drive Broncos, herding his deer from his rhododendron, the deer darting across his fields, running from his home. His deer. His own to protect, as Lee would have it. Alimony? Tuition? Money? Not separate issues, but one. And money can be had, a father cannot. He dropped the map back onto the desk, turned toward the hallway and took a deep breath, gathering all the strength he could muster to rescind his order and to call off the MPs, strength to face Hatcher when it was done.

The autumn sun touched the carpet, then the wall, and Cabot felt drawn to the light. The window faced the meadow, and beyond it, the pond. Stiff cattails, sentries, guarded the banks. Steam rose from the glistening water. A deer suddenly appeared from a blackberry thicket. It stepped forward, its long ears flicking back and forth. The animal approached the water, then carefully lowered its head.

A graininess filled Cabot's throat, the feeling that came over him when the flag was raised at reveille, or when the name of a dead soldier was called out on the field for the third and last time.

The animal raised its head, then turned. The tension in Cabot's side eased. He pressed his palm against the glass. The deer moved toward the row of red maples along the property line. Its coat was the color of the uncut hay. A few seconds later the only sign of the animal was the trembling of the tall grass.

Carolyn Thorman has two books out: Fifty Years of Eternal Vigilance (Peachtree Press, 1989), and ***Holy Orders*** *(Longstreet Press, 1992) She is currently writing a novel,* ***Winning the War.*** *She is a social worker by day and has worked for the Army at Fort Deitrich, MD. Currently she works at the Veterans Hospital in Martinsburg, WV.*

POETRY by LAURIE WAGNER BUYER

THE LEAVING

wood stove warmth
steams my bathed hair
mists smoke stained windows
beyond which
the earth swallows rain.

I sip black tea
drink in the sight, smell, taste,
knowing my world crumbles—
high bank under heavy rain.

burdened with mud, river
rapids still sing,
the land never
runs or hides,
only stands strong, resolute.

days erode. Pieces of my life disappear
in the back of a truck
bare walls and boxes
only a shell remains.

retreat to higher ground,
and higher still,
far above
the swirling depths,
frantic sawyers, shifting gravel
and sand

ride away
pack another dream behind,
hurry!
escape the gathering pools of change.

alone on the riverbank,
I rewash my hair with rain,
my face with tears,
the water reaches out
giving life
taking life

Dovetailing

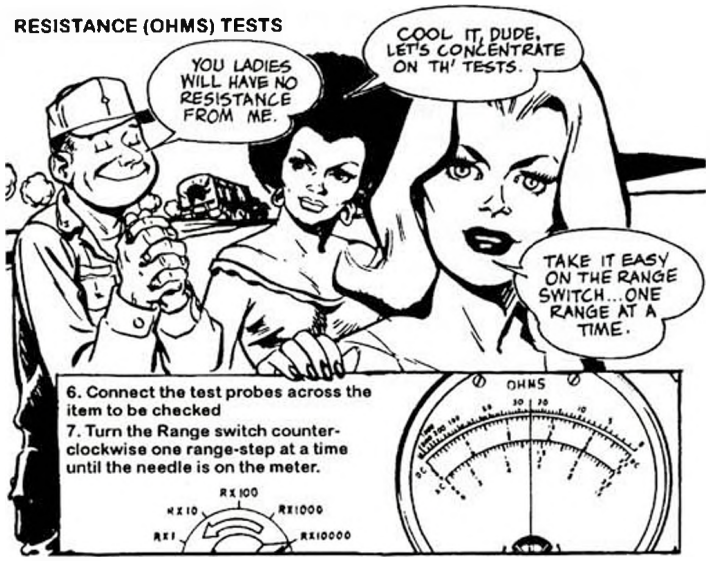
Around 1919 a man spent seven years building
this cabin above the river.

Gathering giant timbers
hand-hewing
dovetailing each joint to fit
chinking with
river mud against the north wind.

After almost sixty years the cabin is only
weathered,
blistered,
worn, with one corner
leaning damp-rotted into the earth.

In the attic I sleep under rain-stained rafters
often waking to wind rustles
a tapping corner of tin.

In dim darkness
I listen, study the walls
logs interlocked
close dovetailing.



Dark Spirit

—for Sy

Who knows what vacant voice roared
through your handsome head that arid
night before the bullet's own stark cry
echoed off the rocks and brush and trees
in that high desert canyon where you,
aching to belong to something beyond yourself,
last sought irreconcilable refuge and rest,

reaching unflinchingly for the grim memory
of grandfather and mother who both found
solace on the same twisting deadend
trail where ashes, long since blown
and drifted in an eerie, eddying wind,
have resolutely returned
to the unanswering, open earth.

I see your dark spirit brighten,
a blazing arc of sure soundless flight,
a solemn shot star against
an abyss of black sky, fierce,
finally fighting free of the pain
and fear that shadowed your
lone, lost and luminous life.

Each adobe you strained to set in
Arizona's blistered sun will endure,
weather and wear the empty days,
stand as monument to the time you
took to build beauty for other lives;
your great heart, your strength, given
as timeless gifts to shelter and save—

but never for yourself, content rather
to track occult elk and gravely bugle up
a rutting bull, pan patiently for a gold
glisten in a pebbled stream, scout
endlessly for arrowheads and artifacts
while, wounded, the world spun slowly away,
loss upon unbearable loss left you no

open door, not one single place to turn
except into the rifle's black eye and
still I see your dark spirit brighten,
brilliant as a lingering morning star,
melting back the ice-edged unknown,
giving up your last good gifts
of compassion, comfort and courage.

HEALING

Sometimes I climb up
into the loft to sit,
surround myself in leather,
in the cushioned softness
of an antique chair
where I can look
a long way
across sage and grass
to the dark pines and
a white bright sky above the ridge.

The sun squats
above the wintered ridge
pierces through window glass
and grazes my face
gaining strength until
I am blanketed in rays
of warmth and the white
light that is the sky
fills an aching emptiness
that is my stoney silence.

I sit in the dark
darkness of near night
listening carefully
to a west wind that rises
out of the end of the day
and I hear answers,
long lost voices caught up
in the call of coyotes,
knowing I no longer remember
the questions never asked.

I let the light
come again out of the night
and I watch the dark
pines recreate themselves
along the long ridge and
the sage crawls out of the earth
to sit stoic and everlasting among
ancient grasses, lichened rocks
and the horses come too stand one by
one, in even ranks, soaking up the sun.

Laurie Wagner Buyer, DM Ranch, PO Box 24, Fairplay, CO 80440. *"Dark Spirit" and "Healing" were recently published in Buyer's first chaptbook,* ***Blue Heron****, ($6, from Dry Crik Press, PO Box 44320, Lemon Cove, CA 93244). She was also selected to participate in the 11th Annual Cowboy Poets gathering in Elko, NV in 1995.*

THE NICEST KILLER I EVER MET

Edgar H. Thompson, PO Box 34, Emory, VA 24327.

The bar is just a few doors down from the traffic circle in the center of Saigon. I stop before I go inside, look up to the top of the tall skinny building, then back down to the sign that extends the width of the structure advertising the Viet Minh Bar. I look towards the pavement and step over a discarded beer bottle. I push against the door which struggles back against me and I go inside.

It is cool inside and there isn't much light. I can make out tables and chairs down the right wall and a bar down the left. A husband and wife, a singing duo from the Philippines, are sitting behind the bar singing "Guantanamera," a song they do more than once every night. There is a spotlight on the singers that makes it hard for my eyes to adjust, but I manage to find my way to the bar where there is an empty stool. A Navy Chief Petty Officer, replete in full beard and Navy khakis, is sitting to the right of the vacant stool.

"Is this seat taken?" I say loud enough for the Chief to hear me but not loud enough to interrupt the singers.

The Chief smiles, both elbows on the bar, a cigarette in his right hand, the smoke spiraling upward. Gesturing with his left hand, he says, "Sit down. I could use the company. What will you have?"

As I climb onto the stool, I smile and say, "You don't have to buy me a drink."

"I don't get to Saigon much. Oblige me, okay?"

I order a double Cutty Sark on the rocks and the bartender places a napkin in front of me as I take off my flight cap.

Looking at the ashtray to his right and crushing his cigarette with his right hand, the Chief then offers his hand to me and introduces himself. "Hector Luego."

Grabbing Hector's hand, I reply, "Herb Thompson."

Hector asks, "What's your unit?"

"I work at the Armed Forces Language School. I train English language instructors."

"A Palace Dog, huh?"

Surprised, I turn to look Hector in the eye. "How did you know that code name? Nobody calls us Palace Dogs anymore."

Hector smiles, takes a sip of his beer and then looks back at me. "I've been here a long time."

Before taking a sip of my own drink, I ask, "How long is long?"

"A little over eight years."

"Eight years!" Strangling over my drink, I am almost speechless. "How did you manage that? I don't know anyone who has been here for eight years."

"I'm a Navy SEAL, and this is where the action is. Besides, I have a Vietnamese wife." I hadn't noticed the SEAL insignia.

"Haven't you been back to the states in that time?"

"No. I've been to most of the Navy bases in the Pacific Rim at one time or another, but I haven't been to the states since I was originally trained in Pensacola. I have been to Spain many times, though."

"Why Spain?"

"I'm from the Basque region." He smiles again, warmly, "You know, the land of the troublemakers and malcontents of Spain? They're my people."

This is turning into a more interesting conversation than I expected. I ask Hector, "How did you end up in the United States Navy?"

"I volunteered and was sworn in at the American Embassy in Madrid. At that time, they were looking for people—you know, bodies—anyone crazy enough to become a Navy SEAL, so they took me."

"Incredible! I have to do my duty or go to jail. Here you are trying to get into what most of my friends are trying to stay out of."

"I was young and full of spit and vinegar. I also had a lot to prove to the world, and I wanted adventure badly. It all sounded perfectly great to me at the time."

"Your English is perfect. I don't hear a trace of an accent."

"Navy SEALs are supposed to be good at languages. Besides, I've been speaking English and Vietnamese so long that I don't even dream in Spanish, let alone think in it."

We've been talking relatively loudly above the din of the music, but the singers take a break and Hector and I no longer have to scream at one another. "I've heard different stories about the SEALs. There's this guy, a SEAL, who knows somebody in our unit. He stays in our barracks when he comes to Saigon. Come to think of it, I'm not sure why. Anyway, the first time I saw him when he walked into our compound, he was carrying a knife in a sheath on his shoulder and another one in a sheath on his leg just above his right knee. He had a .357 Magnum in his hip holster and two M-16s with sixty round banana clips, one for each shoulder. There were holes in his fatigues that he said were put there by snipers while his clothes were hung out to dry after washing. He also wore a Vietnamese name tag above his name strip that he said translated into English as "Animal Man." He said his Vietnamese counterparts had given him the nickname and the special name tag because he had torn some of the enemy limb from limb." I stare blankly into space as I say these things. Then I look directly at Hector. "Is this guy full of bull?"

Hector runs his right hand through his hair and then down his beard, finally cradling his chin between his thumb and forefinger. "Probably not. We've got some weird ones in the outfit."

"Is what he said he did the kind of thing you do?"

"Yes and no. I jump out of planes, particularly to rescue downed pilots, and I do underwater demolition, you know, when you scuba up to a target undetected, attach some plastique and a timer and get the hell out of the way. That's usually all there is to it."

"Do you do those things often?"

"Hey, look at my collar. I'm a Chief Petty Officer, and I've been in the Navy SEALs for over eight years. Of course I've done those things... and more when the situation demands."

Hector smiles again warmly, like a buddy from back home might smile, and it is his warmth, the openness, the friendliness that keeps me from asking him more specific questions about his work. I am not sure I want to know the answers that Hector might give. I also sense that it might not be a good idea to ask questions that might make Hector feel uncomfortable. "I guess you like being in the SEALs, then."

Hector laughs. "Are you kidding? I have to like it. What else am I going to do if I get out of the Navy? Go to work for the Mafia? I'm a highly trained killer, and I'm good at my job."

Hector again smiles warmly, and the repetition of this warm smile begins to bother me a bit. I become aware of a certain tension in the air, a tension caused by my realization that this very nice guy I am talking with could kill me in seconds if he wished. Who knows how many people Hector had killed. The certainty of this flashes through my mind and the seat of my pants simultaneously. Suddenly, a simple conversation in a bar doesn't seem quite so civilized, so urbane anymore. I finally respond to what Hector has said. "I guess you're right. I never thought of it that way before."

Hector adds, "That's another reason I stay in Vietnam. Saigon is about as civilized as I need to get. You don't want to turn an 'animal' like me loose too often or for too long on genteel society. I might self-destruct." He smiles, warmly.

I am definitely getting uncomfortable, not because of anything Hector is doing, but because I realize that I don't know Hector very well, and Hector might *really* be unpredictable. I finish the rest of my drink, get the bartender's attention and order Hector another Beer La Rue. I stand up and put my flight cap on and reach for Hector's hand. "It's been nice talking with you, but I've got to meet some friends at La Cave for dinner in a few minutes."

Hector takes my hand and shakes it, not too hard but with the strength anyone would expect from an average handshake. "Hey, I've enjoyed it. Thanks for the beer."

I hesitate to let go of Hector's hand. I want to say something else, but I'm not sure what. I finally say, "It's been an honor. Good luck to you."

Hector senses my uneasiness, releases my hand and says, "Thanks."

I reach the entrance, open the door and step outside. The oppressive humidity hits me immediately. I turn to the right to start my walk to La Cave, which is just up the street, but I pause a moment. I look in the window at the front of the bar, and I can see Hector still sitting there, the seat next to him where I had been sitting is still vacant.

AN INFORMAL INSPECTION

Frederick J. McGavran, 2560 Perkins Lane, Cincinnati, OH 45208-2723.

The most difficult problem a senior officer faces, thought Captain Grice, is how to impress an admiral. Compared to this, the tactical situation was secondary and best left to unsophisticated junior officers, like the one conducting the briefing. The smarter ones had discovered that although they couldn't win the war during their year in Vietnam, they could advance their careers.

Commander Moore, sitting beside the Captain, had learned this well. When the Captain reached for a cigarette, Moore had his lighter ready before the filter touched the Captain's lips.

The Lieutenant giving the briefing paused.

"Well?" said the Commander.

"Today's operations include one medcap in addition to normal patrols."

The Captain wasn't listening; he had bigger problems than who was going to search sampans on the river, or who would pass out aspirin to the natives. That afternoon the Admiral was making one of his informal inspections, and the Captain had to have something to show him.

"Say, Phil," he said to the Commander. "What have we got planned for this afternoon?"

The Commander, who had been pretending to follow the briefing, was caught off guard.

"Well, ah, Captain," he began, looking for the new Lieutenant to whom he had assigned the Admiral's visit. "Since he seemed to like things the last time, I thought we'd just kind of do the same again."

Lieutenant Cormit leaned forward and passed the Commander a schedule. Recently arrived from the States, Cormit still wore unfaded fatigues and an intense, eager expression.

"Yes, Sir, here it is," the Commander said. "He arrives at 1100 at the helo pad, we greet him and escort him back here to the bunker for a briefing and some chow, then we go down to the pier to inspect some boats, then..."

"Then we hand out some medals to the troops and then we get rid of him," the Captain finished the sentence. "We've gone that route before, Phil. This time I want something new."

The only sound in the bunker was the vibration of the briefing officer's pointer against the map. Commander Moore studied LT Cormit's schedule, as if the answer were hidden within it.

"Yes, Sir, Captain, I see exactly what you mean." He crumpled the schedule and held it out behind him, to avoid LT Cormit's startled eyes. "No originality."

Recrossing his legs, the Captain leaned back. As expected, the informal inspection was too great a challenge for his staff. They didn't understand two star psychology, perhaps because none of them were up for promotion to admiral.

"Go on with the briefing." He waved his cigarette at the briefing officer and gazed at the map.

The briefing officer resumed talking about tide tables and the effect of rainfall on debris in the river. He had seldom gone so far, and found the attention stimulating. As his pointer moved with the current along the branches of the Mekong River, it was followed intently by the staff. It rapped over canals that were rivers at high tide and paths through the jungle at low, until it rested on a canal near their base. The French had cut the canal as far as the district town, then left the tributary to meander to the lower branch of the river.

Captain Grice allowed his thoughts to wander between admirals and canals. Like everyone else, the Admiral was bored by briefings and longed to escape. So every few weeks, he put on his fatigues, strapped on his revolver, and flew to the Delta, where he received another lecture on operations and a few medals to hang on the men who had really seen the action.

The pointer was tapping along the Cho Lach canal. The water dropped six feet at low tide, decreasing the width of the canal by one third. The Captain straightened up.

"Didn't we have some trouble in there a while ago?" he demanded.

"Yes, Sir," replied the briefing officer. "This whole area beyond the district town is VC. The last time we tried to run the canal, there were enemy-initiated firefights at these points." He pointed at three red arrows on the map. "We had to turn back."

"When was that?" the Captain asked.

"About three weeks ago," replied Commander Moore. "We nearly lost a boat. Every time we go in there, we get hit."

"We could do something with that," Captain Grice reflected. "Even if it's just showing the flag."

"That's all they were doing the last time, Captain," the briefing officer said. "They were lucky to get out."

"I wonder what would happen if we went in there, say, with two boats and a couple of gunships for cover. Just go in real slow like you were going to have a medcap in Cho Lach, and when we get to the other side of the town just kick them in the ass and go like hell."

LT Cormit leaned forward excitedly.

"If you go balls to the wall with gunship cover, you'll make it," Cormit answered the rhetorical question. "As long as they don't know you're coming."

Captain Grice gazed at the staff officer the way he had gazed at the map. Cormit spent so much time in the bunker, he hardly had a tan.

"They won't have any warning. We won't even send a recon bird over first. We'll just take two boats and at fifteen hundred this afternoon, you'll run the Cho Lach canal."

"Won't the Admiral be here then?" asked the Commander.

"That's right, Phil. Right after your briefing about how the tide conditions are just right and how this operation is to test the enemy's reactions."

"Yes, Sir!" exclaimed Moore. It wasn't every day he got to brief an admiral. "He'll really appreciate this, Captain."

As the Captain reached for another cigarette, three lighters snapped open. The day was looking up; his staff was catching on.

"And while John Cormit and the gunships run the canal," the Commander continued, "we monitor the whole thing back here."

"Wrong, Phil," the Captain replied, exhaling. "After the briefing, you go with LT Cormit to handle communications. The Admiral and I will watch the show from a chopper above you."

"Captain, sending a full commander just to handle communications looks like—"

"Like I don't want it screwed up," the Captain said evenly, leaning closer to the Commander. "I want a play by play from someone I can trust."

The Commander was reassured by his Captain's confidence.

"Yes, Sir."

"Good," said the Captain, rising. "We bring the Admiral here for the briefing. Then you leave and get on station while we pass out the medals and have lunch. By the time we're over you, you should be ready to go."

"Yes, Sir."

Chairs squeaked out of his way as the Captain left the bunker. Just outside he stopped, blinking in the sunlight. There was enough time for a couple more cups of coffee while he read the morning messages, then it would be almost time for the Admiral to arrive. Smiling, he pulled his black beret down to what he imagined was a more menacing angle. It was going to be a beautiful day.

Gunnersmate Third Class Witworth was reassembling the twin .50 caliber machineguns on the bow when his boat captain told him the inspection was canceled.

"Good," exclaimed Witworth, pushing his hair out of his eyes. "I just took a malaria pill, and I couldn't stand around here all afternoon anyway."

He reached for the gun cover.

"Keep workin' on 'em," the Chief said. "We're gonna need 'em."

"What's up?" asked Witworth, dropping the gun cover. "Another joy ride to show some brass what a PBR is like?"

"Not hardly. Us and twenty boat are goin' to run the Cho Lach canal."

"You gotta be shittin' me, Chief!" cried Witworth. "We about got greased the last time we tried that shit."

The Chief squatted beside the mount to examine the feeding trays on the guns.

"All I know, Gunner, is that Mr. Cormit runs out and tells me we're runnin' the canal. How many rounds you got aboard?"

"A thousand. But what for? What's goin' on?"

"Load an extra five hundred and link 'em up like I showed you. Get the snipe to help you carry 'em."

The Chief stood up. Witworth ran his hand through his hair again.

"But Chief," he complained. "With that malaria pill, I don't know if I can go all afternoon without shittin'."

"Once we're in that canal," promised the Chief, "I guarantee you won't have no trouble gettin' your asshole to tighten up." He started back to the coxswain's flat. "Oh, I almost forgot. Put on a clean uniform. We got some commander ridin' us."

Witworth kicked the gun cover and ran both hands through his hair.

"Shit," he said. "Shit, shit, shit!"

Captain Grice stayed in his jeep until the Admiral's helicopter had landed. His staff was lined up beside the pad, and he knew that from the air, the Admiral couldn't tell he wasn't with them. Swirling across the pad, the dust blotted out his staff and covered the window of his jeep.

Flicking his cigarette out the door, he counted to ten to give his guest time to climb out and recover his balance. Then the Captain stepped confidently across the pad to greet the Admiral and lead him through the haze.

"Dave, you look great," gasped the Admiral, gripping his hand. "How is everything down here now?"

"Very good, Admiral," the Captain shouted over the whine of the helicopter. "You're going to see some real improvements."

The Admiral would see very little, because his escort helicopter was landing, stirring up another dust storm.

Usually the Admiral enjoyed introductions, but after hacking a greeting at Commander Moore, he allowed the Captain to guide him to his jeep. Moore scrambled in just in time to escape the dust. As they turned toward the bunker, Captain Grice saw the rest of his staff running through the storm for their jeeps.

"I don't know how you do it down here," wheezed the Admiral. "The dust alone is enough to kill me."

The old man was sweating so heavily his fatigues had gone limp over his shrunken frame. Noting the sunken chest and quick breathing, the Captain wondered what effect his superior's death might have upon his own chance for making admiral.

"Would you care for a cigarette, Admiral?" he asked as they bumped over a chuckhole.

"Yes, wonderful," the Admiral coughed. Suddenly his face twisted into a grin. "You know, Dave, this is a far cry from the old Navy."

"It certainly is," agreed the Captain.

Commander Moore was laughing, too, but not so hard he forgot to pass the cigarettes and lighter. When they arrived at the bunker the briefing was delayed fifteen minutes while the old man went to the bathroom.

From the air or a chart, trees only lined the canal; from the water they looked like the edge of an impenetrable jungle. Beyond the district town, the foliage was thicker, and the fields, after years of neglect, were less easily defined.

Witworth peered down the barrels of his guns at the mouth of the canal. The twin .50s swung lazily across the canal and out into the river again as the boat slowly circled. The other boat was lying a little farther out, waiting for the order to go in. Pushing back his helmet, Witworth twisted uncomfortably in the canvas seat. Despite the fear, the malaria pill was starting its work and anxiety and sickness churned his guts. He turned to the boat captain, but the gun mount was too low to see him.

"Shit," thought Witworth, "I'm gonna have to shit."

The Chief turned the boat back into the river again. He had checked the engines and the pumps for the last time, and the amidships M-60 gunner and the after .50 gunner were rummaging through a case of C-rations. For several minutes, Commander Moore had been in the forward compartment fiddling with the radio equipment.

"Hey, Chief!" Moore called up. "I think we've got it. Try it now."

The Chief picked up his hand set and pressed the transmit button. To his surprise, both the base and the other boat could still hear him.

"It's number one, Sir," he answered.

The Chief leaned over the wheel and looked at the bow as the Commander climbed up on deck.

"Hey, Chief!" Witworth called. "Have I got time to shit?"

"Make it quick."

Witworth pulled himself out of the gun tube, swung along the side past the coxswain's flat, and squatted over the stern. They were close enough to the other boat that jeers and catcalls carried over the engines.

"They should be in the air by now," the Commander said nervously. "Call them again."

As the Chief called the base, Moore's eyes wandered up the sunny river. Two brown dots were skimming the water like dragonflies over a pond.

"Here they are, Commander!"

Moore squinted at the helicopters rushing toward them.

"That's our cover," he said. "And where—there they are! That's the Admiral and his escort!"

High above, two more helicopters almost blended with the afternoon sky. The Chief passed the handset to the Commander.

"Hurry it up, Witworth," the Chief called.

To the hoots of the other gunners, Witworth struggled to button his trousers and flak jacket. He swore back cheerfully, but the malaria pill had chilled him. As he climbed forward, the Chief told him to train his guns to port.

He lowered himself into the tub and cranked the mount around as they turned into line behind the lead boat. The canal swung before him, then he was looking down the river as they headed for the opening in the trees. One of the helicopters roared over so low Witworth waved at the side gunner before it swept out of sight. The sickness was replaced by cold, hard fear that clenched his bowels and held his finger sweating over the firing key.

It was almost low tide, and as they entered the canal their wake rolled over the mud to the bank. Witworth adjusted his sights so that the guns pointed at the base of the trees.

Children ran out of hootches along the bank, and women looked up from their work to see the boats. The children waved and shouted, "Salem! Marlboro!" but the women were silent. Witworth liked the children, who pranced like little Buddhas before his sights. Most days he threw C-rations to see them scramble. Today, however, he only waved and shouted, "Okay, Charlie!"

They were making less than half-speed, so their wakes wouldn't swamp any sampans. Only one little boat passed them heading toward the river before they reached the district town. The old man in the stern and the old woman squatting in the prow did not look at the olive drab boats or their sweating gunners.

The district town was a cluster of hootches leaning over the water on poles. The filth left by the tide lay under them. By the market, stone steps led down the bank to the mud. At the top of the steps, a policeman in a white shirt stood beside a lone Shell gasoline pump. The other adults were asleep in their hootches; only children ran out to wave.

Commander Moore described this as "light commercial activity" to his superiors far above. A special circuit between him, the Captain, and the Admiral let him give a running commentary, leaving open the primary circuit between LT Cormit in the lead boat and their cover boat and gunships. The Commander let the Chief monitor the tactical net, while he took care of command appreciation.

Being on an operation excited the Commander. He found the children "very, uh, very appealing," the policeman "an encouraging sign of increased government control," and the Shell pump "kind of funny to see in a place like this." As they started into the curve at the beginning of their run to the other river, the two gunships roared over them, drowning the Commander's commentary. The lead boat gathered speed, its brown wake bursting into white foam. Then the Chief pushed his throttles forward, and their bow rose out of the water.

The Commander gripped the rail and shouted, "Here we go!" just as the boat swung into the curve, half turning him around. Astern, their wake boiled across the mud flats. The canal narrowed in the curve, increasing the sensation of speed and power.

Witworth's sights bobbed up and down along the bank as they bounced through the lead boat's wake. Around the curve, he saw a boy in khaki shorts holding a fishnet. Surprised by the boats, he dropped the net and put his index fingers in his ears. Commander Moore wondered why he was standing like that, with their wakes splashing over his legs.

Although the Commander's commentary reminded him of a sports announcer who didn't know much about the game, Captain Grice was happy with his show. Several thousand feet below, the boats crawled up the waterway like green water bugs, stretching silver "V"s behind them. The Admiral shifted excitedly in his seat, leaning as far out the door as his seatbelt would allow. With one hand he pressed the helmet against his good ear, and with the other he gripped the passenger strap. All we need now, thought the Captain, is a little action.

"Jesus Christ!" Moore screamed.

In a shower of foam, the lead boat leapt out of the water and veered wildly for the right bank. Something like a long cigar shot across their bow, then the gunners started shooting and the bank exploded with splintered trees and orange tracers.

Witworth saw the flash of the third rocket and was firing before it streaked over him and cracked into the

trees. Then the lead boat swerved back across the stream toward the left bank.

The Chief turned hard to miss it, throwing Moore over the engine covers and raising Witworth's guns so high he fired a burst at the sky.

The Captain and the Admiral watched the tiny boats weave across each other's wakes. Then Witworth's tracers sliced by them like ugly orange talons. The helicopter roared into a climb that dumped the Admiral onto Captain Grice. The old man's helmet slid over his eyes and he yelled, "What's happening? What's happening?"

"They've been hit!" Grice shouted into the Admiral's bad ear.

"We're hit!" screamed the Admiral. "We'll crash!"

Turning between the lead boat and the bank, the Chief throttled back both engines hard. Commander Moore rolled off the engine covers and peered over the gunwale. Bow nearly touching the bank, the lead boat was beached in the mud. The crew were sprawled on deck as if dead.

For a second the guns were silent as the gunners reversed their trains. Then the men in the lead boat stirred, the Chief cried, "Put some fire in there!" and the gunners raked the bank. Easing his throttles forward, the Chief moved down on the stranded boat.

"Not us, it's the boats that are hit!" Captain Grice shouted in the Admiral's ear. "They can't get us up here. We're too high."

Half understanding, the Admiral stared at him from under the round flight helmet.

"it's fine, Admiral. Look!" The Captain pointed out the door. Far below circled the gunships; the boats were just little specks on a twisted ribbon of water.

The Admiral pushed back his helmet. One of the gunships was sweeping down on a firing run, spitting out puffs of smoke that snapped into the treeline beside the boats. Then the other helicopter swung down and sprayed a cascade of orange bullets at the opposite bank.

The bullets swished over Witworth and cracked into the trees. As they nosed up to the beached boat, he stopped firing. The boat was so far out of the water that the crew couldn't jump from it to Witworth's boat.

The Chief touched his bow to the mud and yelled, "Get 'em aboard!"

Witworth scrambled out of his mount and crouched on the bow. The crew of the beached boat were over the side and plunging through the mud like men pursued by phantoms in a dream. LT Cormit had a revolver, and every few steps he threw a shot behind him. Just as the first man reached the bow something pocked the mud and splattered the side.

Commander Moore pulled himself to his feet to stare at the beached boat.

"For Christ's sake, Chief!" he started, then he remembered the handset. He had snapped the cord in his fall. Angrily he threw it down. Now how were the Captain and the Admiral going to know what was going on?

Again the mud curled in an angry line along the side of the boat. My God, thought Moore, we're drawing fire! Frantically, he grabbed a grenade launcher from the weapons rack and jerked the trigger. The round sailed into the trees and burst among the branches.

Leaning over the bow, Witworth pulled the men aboard. LT Cormit was last, panting and cursing and kicking. Already their bow was pointing back up the stream as the Chief backed away from the bank. Waving his revolver, Cormit lurched to his feet. Then something slapped his flak jacket and he tumbled over the gun tub.

Catching Cormit by the jacket, Witworth saw the hole gouged in his stomach. Cormit's head flopped back, spilling the blood from his mouth onto the deck. Witworth gagged. Grabbing the Lieutenant under the arms, he dragged him around the coxswain's flat to the space between the engines. The boat was rising onto step to clear the ambush.

"What's this?" cried Commander Moore.

Witworth opened his mouth to answer, but the hot saliva was flowing and he vomited onto the engine covers. The amidships gunner and the after .50 gunner were firing, while the gunships circled lower to destroy the beached boat before the enemy could strip it. Witworth looked up and saw the rockets streak down to smother the boat with fire and billowing phosphorous. Then he pushed past Commander Moore to his guns.

The Chief kept the boat at full throttle all the way past the town to the river. Their wake rolled a water taxi crazily against the steps to the Shell pump. Again, children ran out to see them pass. Although some of them waved and shouted, Witworth saw that most of them were laughing.

"It was just like World War II down there," the Admiral kept repeating. He was seated beside the Captain in the briefing room.

"Yes, Sir," agreed the Captain. "I'm glad you were here to see it."

"I saw some action in the Pacific, Dave, and let me tell you, it was nothing like this!"

"Yes, Sir," the Captain repeated.

"Why, if we hadn't been there to draw off their anti-aircraft fire, they might have got our gunships, too."

"Yes, Sir, and let me say it was an inspiration for you to risk yourself like that."

"Oh, it's not me I'm worried about," replied the Admiral. "It's the men. Did we lose many men, Dave?"

The Captain turned to Commander Moore.

"Well, Sir, one officer KIA and three men had light shrapnel wounds."

"I can hardly believe it," exclaimed the Admiral. "An action like that with a boat lost, and only four casualties."

"It's the flak jackets," Moore explained. "They'll stop anything."

"Would you like a cigarette, Admiral?" asked the Captain, motioning to the Commander.

"Fine," agreed the old man. "But I still have one question."

"What's that?" asked Captain Grice, taking a cigarette from Moore and passing the pack to the Admiral.

"Maybe I got turned around up there, Dave, but it looked to me like that boat came out the same end of the canal as it went in."

There was a loud click as Commander Moore opened his lighter.

"Yes, Sir," said the Captain, clearing his throat. "This type of operation is, as you know, basically a show of force."

"I understand that."

"So we feel we've accomplished our objective when we demonstrate our ability to go in there and hit Charlie at will on his own ground."

The Admiral leaned back and exhaled slowly.

"Yes," he finally said. "I think that's right. I don't think they'll try that trick again." He smiled at the Captain. "And you know, Dave, I'm just damned glad I was here to see you do it."

"Thank you, Admiral," the Captain replied. "It's just the routine down here."

Captain Grice smiled with the Admiral. It had been one of the most successful operations of his career.

At the pier, Witworth and the other sailors were cleaning up the boat. There was an argument about who had to clean up the mess on the engine covers, since it was the amidships gunner's part of the boat, but Witworth was the one who had vomited. The Chief settled it by telling them both to do it. So Witworth filled a bucket with river water and the amidships gunner grabbed a swab, and they washed LT Cormit's blood and Witworth's sickness out of the scuppers.

"I'm never takin' another malaria pill," Witworth swore as he filled another bucket. "I'm never goin' through that shit again."

Poetry by Ray Melvin

The Wait

In the dark times, will there be singing?
Yes, there will be singing.
About the dark times.
Bertolt Brecht

Stoned on mescaline and a hit of acid
the boy stumbles upon the outline
of a deer made of moss
and flowers, its bones missing.
His brother is in Viet Nam,
and he tries not to think about it,
tries not to think
about jail, whether or not he'll run.

When he walks out of the woods
and onto the road,
the man who lives up the way
almost runs him down.
He watches dust grains
settle on his jacket, listens
as the truck rattles out of sight,
enters an oak's thick shade,
slides down the cut bank,
follows a jeweled south slope
of tansy ragwort...

Back at the house by evening,
he is jittery.
A sharp-edged netting has fallen
over him. He reaches through it,
finds his guitar,
but when he plays the tune
is a senseless rattle. All
that was missing were the bones.

If he could he would disappear,
walk back to the meadow,
lay down upon the deer's shape
and sleep forever,
his Resistol over his eyes.
But escape is a far country,
and sleep is no option. The firs
on the ridge above Ruby Creek
lean together, and the darkness
waits crouched among them.

Earning the Moon

We must earn any moon we present.
William Stafford

Flight engineers got men there
and my grandmother refused to believe
the television screen. Her moon
would tell when the world would end.

Her faith earned her the moon
just as the Oregon coast accepts
the tide's constant wear.
Faith was not so easy for me.

I believed the television screen
just as I believed to soldier
betrayed all that raged within me,
the abstract and the real.

A Vietnamese child burned beneath
the moon my grandmother used
as guide when she stooped to place
new seeds into spring ground.

When she died, the day vanished.
Without her breath
morning sank into the mountains,
and the moon waited in the west.

Ray Melvin, 1702 N. Zappone Pl., Spokane, WA 99207.

Poetry by William A. Wolf, Jr.

Three Framed Photographs

Father gave up his exhausted ghost
in King, Wisconsin,
in the Veteran Home there.
He left remains in glossy black and white,
framed, on my wall in a row of three.

Photograph, 8x10 (1946):
under a winter sky, a tall thin man in
open jacket—western-style belt buckle
skewed left—with arm around young woman
wearing a white coat
with cornucopia sleeves.

Divorce: a punctuating word pronounced
from a legal escarpment high above
three small children.

Father went to live elsewhere even before
its final utterance, as if its ritual—
performed by dawdling conjurers who
sent down indifferent but compelling
damns upon certain marital bonds—had
early on confused him,
making him forget where home was.

His removed weight unbalanced us.

His daughter and two sons (I, at nine,
being oldest of the brood he and mother
made) laid on mother's cold slab of
satisfaction and listened, resigned,
to the ritual's rumbling and the family's
cracking that did not end just because
the sacrificial word, finally honed
well enough, came down and cut us apart....

We passed on to semi-orphanage

while mother took scissors against
the long-jawed man in the photo album
to promote her vision of life without him.

Occasionally, through, some of us
would rise like a Sunday phoenix: he would
come by, taking my brother and I (never
my sister, the youngest, who mother always
kept close) to places like

movies

(giant spiders; Roman warriors; spaceships
fleeing devastated Earth; or boring epics
about pinch-faced people suffering
film noire afflictions)

fairs

(riding home in a Cadillac convertible
like Paul Newman drove in *Hud*: the sky
completely, carelessly blue; we boys
wearing broad smiles under broad-brimmed
white straw hats he'd bought us)

taverns

(sitting on stools; bright colored
soft drinks flanking tap beer on the smooth
dark wood bar; the Wolf youngsters getting
an antsy buzz from boredom that eventually
meanders us outside to play pleasureless
games)

Sometimes, even taverns would've been okay
when Sunday afternoons grew less bright
from waiting... waiting... no call...
till the clock hands passed hope
and semaphored the nearing end
even of wishing: going-with-Dad clothes
finally came off, and were put away
(like father, after awhile, put away his
visits).

One time, we bolted from house to car,
and climbing in I saw a magazine on the
passenger side floor. Its cover painting
was a lurid depiction of a World War Two
scene. My hand moved to it quickly.
But it opened to a page filled
by a hardly-clad woman with comment-worthy
breasts, my instant thought, then:

What kind of war is *this*?

Father alertly claimed the magazine with
discomfiture. "It's for men," he said,
my boy's notion of a good explanation
not satisfied, but not defended.

Photograph, 6x4 1/2 (1944):
uniformed man at attention getting
Silver Star from a general on
field-expedient parade ground;
part of a tree-sprinkled Luzon hill
in the near distance...

Photograph, 8x10 (1968):
(little picture inset in lower left corner:
young man standing at attention getting
his first Purple Heart; part of
bush covered Vietnamese hill in background)
young man in hospital bed, left leg in
traction; shaking hands with smiling
general after the Heart's pinned on, while
a tall thin man wearing suit, short-cropped
hair, stands in middle background....

At Great Lakes Naval Hospital that day
Father saw my wound's dressing changed:
the corpsman, white-uniformed, came
to my beside (which sometimes was
maddeningly ample with enveloping
mattress-and-pillow softness) with the
water-bottle spritzer and dressing-stuffing;
and I said to my Father,
he might want to take a walk;
dressing change was not pretty. (Was not
painless, either.) Declining, he stayed.

The upper thigh's wound was large, deep,
ugly; a part of me unveiled for three-times
daily inspection like the visible, colorful
strata of geologic formations bared for
specialists' poking.

The man in the suit with the close-cropped
hair observed the corpsman's spritzing
of covered gauze; watched with dignity
his pulling (my wincing); his stuffing
(my gritting).

War had, as mediator, guided my Father
and I to common ground: we had snapped
salutes; we'd counted off loud and clear
in dress-right-dressed formations; we'd
added our own slogging motion to waves of
ranks surrendering, seemingly,
to maniacally dice-tossing Destiny; along
the way often testing the keenness of our
enemies' and Savior's eyes.

From that, we'd come to share those marks—
inner and outer—that to our kind is a
password proclaimed and recognized.

But the expanding fault-line rift of years
empty of touch
could not be closed even by that;
though, while it failed to bring us within
arm-around-shoulder range, it still shrunk
that cleft so we were close enough to see
each other; to then restrainedly wave
(with out hearts) in recognition.

And recognition is the essence—
if not the whole cloth—
of love.

Enemies of the Nation

He's just nine.
    He is certain, though,
that he will, someday,
    enlist and go
off to a camp
    where the drill sergeants glare
as they cuss out recruits
    with a voice that could scare
even enemies
of the nation.

Between then
    and the present day
he will cry, and fight,
    and laugh, and pray;
telling his friends,
    like a prophet of pride,
he will join the Marines
    and be warily eyed
by the enemies
of the nation.

For weeks now
    he has been a Marine—
not a turd, or crud;
    despised, unclean.
Finally he is home,
    taking honorable place
among family and friends
    as a man who will face
the enemies
of the nation.

"Good luck, son."
    Then his hand is gripped
by his Dad, whose words—
    and tears—are clipped.
"Look at our boy!"
    Mother tearfully beams
at her uniformed child
    who will star in her dreams
with the enemies
of the nation.

A slow ship,
    then a cargo plane
to the heat, the stink,
    the trucks, the strain;
shuffled by clerks
    till he reaches his squad,
where he's faced by the young
    who've had innocence trod
by the enemies
of the nation.

They're struck down
    by the magic stones—
in the meat, the lungs,
    the guts, the bones—
fired from wands
    issued sorcerer-boys
who were proud to be honed
    as the edge that destroys
the enemies
of the nation.

He works war
    for a bitter year.
He is crazed and hard
    from hurt, from fear.
Spoiled by death,
    he is well out of sight
of the family that prays
    he'll be spared from the might
of the enemies
of the nation.

He comes back—
    wearing slacks and shirt—
with a Star, some Hearts;
    some scars; alert,
walking on eggs
    while he goes to extremes.
No one speaks of the times
    that he wakes up and screams
at the enemies
of the nation.

His leave ends.
    He rejoins the Corps
in the flesh, but heart
    and mind, no more.
Angry inside,
    disillusioned, unnursed,
he is bound to be free
    of the service he's cursed
like the enemies
of the nation.

"The years pass:"
    a cliché he's lived.
And his heart and mind
    are soothed and sieved.
Marriage and bills,
    family pleasures and pains,
keep his thoughts out of thrall
    to the ghosts of campaigns
against enemies
of the nation.

And years bring
to him pride he'd earned
in the days when pride—
and flags—were burned.
Posthumous now,
it's a modest award
for the youngster at arms
who believed he'd be lord
of the enemies
of the nation.

William A. Wolf, Jr., 835 W. Spencer St., Appleton, WI 54914. William A. Wolf, Jr. is a USMC/Vietnam veteran; a semi-recluse; a rope-jumper (a TV-watching-friendly exercise); and a student of Tarot and Qabalah.

Poetry by Victor Pearn

Semper Fidelis

marines ran
along the beach
in san diego a slow
group moving in step
some recruit named
gene autry sang cadence
six seven eight miles
sand sun sweat pacific
I always kept pace
clapped and sang
"everywhere we go
people want to know
who we are so we tell them
we are the marine corps
mighty mighty marine corps."

twenty years later
I go out running alone
peace begins in your
neighborhood in your
home in your heart
we arm to the teeth
to protect democracy
now we need to cease
fire to disarm, I run
longer now work my body
to push forward thinking
about stopping violence
trying to understand
the plight of 250,000
homeless veterans.

Victor Pearn, 745 30th St. #3, Boulder, CO 80303.

Poetry by Cortney Davis

Flashback

All these acts are intended
to deaden the heart.
—Susan Griffin

Fuck yourself with a bottle;
take down your panties and tease me.
If I refused he'd fast forward

a porno film to the *good part*—
the woman being sandwiched by two men.
He said to get hard he thought

of girlfriends who married someone else
or the girls in Vietnam who liked
butterfly kisses after sex,

his eyelashes beating their fragile bodies.
Every night he got stoned, slowing
the visions: His own men falling

from the white decks, shirts
and backs torn open, sparking.
His men pitching dimes to children

who dove for coins in the Perfume river,
tossing them the shiny grenade
they fished up like a prize

a second before the puff of smoke,
the hole blown in the surface
through which water snakes slid,

like fingers, up to clutch the banks.
Drunk one night, he and the men
fired at a line of children,

at the mothers keening their grief-cries.
The barefoot husbands waited,
bayonets fixed. He showed me

how he stood then, tore
away his shirt, pointed to his heart—
asking for it, begging.

Cortney Davis, Redding, CT.

Poetry by Francesca J. Sidoti

The Honeymooners

Uncle Sam generously offered to pick up their honeymoon tab,
so off they went, all expenses paid, fully equipped and accoutered—
to Southeast Asia.
They never had to shell out one American dime
as long as they agreed to shell out grenades,
and take a few jabs. Their entry upon the connubial state
thus marked the advent of such touching times,
the GI and his teen bride, crawling alone together side by side,
the two of them, through that jungle—
pitching a pup tent just big enough for intimate battle—
dodging bullet wounds and agent orange forever
and ever and ever
for better or for worse,
in napalm
and in hell—
til death would them part,
so help them God. And conveniently she
never even had to leave the States to embark upon their sojourn,
for such bliss could be had from the kitchen chair,
and endlessly he took her there, back to that exotic place
of punji stakes and poison snakes,
by way of daymares and booze
on one eternal honeymoon
at the Viet Nam Resort.

Francesca J. Sidoti, 1143 New Scotland Rd., Albany, NY 12208-1036.

SITUATION REPORT

Del Pranke, 2780 Kumu St., Pahoa, HI 96778.

HEADQUARTERS
9th Marine Division (Rein), FMF
c/o FPO San Francisco, California 96602
3/HAL/jlt
1500
16 Apr 1966

From: Commanding Officer
To: Commanding General, 3rd Marine Division
Subj: 9th Marines SITREP Number 106 as of 162400H
April 1966
Ref: (a) Division Order 3100.1B
Encl: (1) Operations, 3d Bn, 9th Marines
(2) Operations, 2d Bn, 9th Marines
(3) Operations, 3d Bn, 9th Marines

1. In accordance with reference (a), the following information and enclosures (1), (2), and (3) are forwarded.

a. Operational Highlights

(1) At 160405H, Co H/2/9 (AT 979585) was attacked by a VC force estimated at two VC Main Force companies, one VC Guerrilla company and one hundred laborers supported by 60mm and 81mm mortars, 57mm recoilless rifles and machine gun fire...[1]

It started for me when I ran over Bob with the mule. Bob and I were both members of 2/9's 81mm Mortar Platoon. He was the assistant gunner in his mortar squad, and I was an ammo man in mine. The day I ran over him he was riding shotgun on the front of the mechanical mule—a small vehicle which was no more than a four-wheeled platform with an engine and a steering wheel.

I ran over him while we were coming back to 2/9's battalion area after we had delivered the day's accumulation of trash from our platoon to the battalion dump. When we hit a washboard section of the abandoned railroad which served as our roadway, the mechanical mule bucked him off. Bob went over the front of the mule, and the mule went over Bob.

His knee was injured so badly that Bob was put on light duty for a month. When his gun section was send on an operation with Hotel Company a few days later, I was ordered to take his place as the assistant gunner.

> On 16 April, an old enemy, the R-40 "Doc Lap" Battalion, attacked one of the companies from Lieutenant Colonel Donahue's 2d Battalion, 9th Marines in position north of the abandoned 39th Ranger outpost at Phong Thu. Captain Everette S. Roane, had established defensive positions north of Route 4, and put a squad ambush south of the road. Suddenly at 0400, the enemy opened up with recoilless rifle and mortar fire. Simultaneously, the enemy launched two company-size assaults, one from the southeast and the other from the southwest. The attack from the southwest, about a hundred men, ran into a Marine ambush and stalled.
>
> According to the Marine squad leader, his men "shot 12-15 VC for sure—most likely more." At dawn the following morning, the squad leader found two enemy bodies in front of his position.[2]

The approximately 150-man force attacking from the southeast reached the north side of Route 4, but was unable to penetrate the Marine Company's perimeter. As soon as the attackers crossed the road,

> [t]he VC were like ducks in a shooting gallery. Many VC were shot as they crossed the road and went down into the paddy in front of 2d Platoon. At one point, 22 VC bodies could be counted in that vicinity. Other VC were shot as they attempted to remove bodies. During the lulls in illumination, as bodies would be removed and more VC would cross the road, there would be more bodies.[3]

Marine aerial observers arrived overhead and as Marine artillery responded, the enemy's supporting mortars and recoilless rifles fell silent. The VC ground assault dissipated, and the attacking force broke up into small groups. Enemy probes continued along the Marine company perimeter, but, "this most likely was to cover the collection of VC casualties and withdrawal of the main force."

> At first light, the Marines counted 12 enemy bodies, but estimated killing another 63. Company H had not gone unscathed, suffering seven dead and 37 wounded, largely as a result of the enemy's recoilless rifle and mortar attack.[4]

Beginning in early March, we Marines in and around Da Nang not only had to fight the commandos, but were stuck in the middle of an internal South Vietnamese power struggle between the national forces of Nguyen Cao Ky and the followers of deposed I Corps Commander Nguyen Canh Thi. This situation actually climaxed on May 18th in an incident famous in Marine Corps lore, when Colonel John Chaisson and Lt. Gen. Lewis Walt faced down a rebel leader on a mined bridge over the Da Nang (Song Han) River.

In mid-April Hotel Company was ordered to secure the Vietnamese Ranger Fort at Phong Thu. Phong Thu was a small village consisting of two hamlets located about 20 klicks south of Da Nang airbase. The village and the fort sat at the juncture of Highway 4 and the main north-south railroad tracks, just north of where the tracks branched to go out to Anh Hoa. From Phong Thu, Highway 4 wound its way north of the Ky Lam River across the coastal plain toward the Laotian border.

Earlier the Rangers had pulled out, *en masse*, to take part in the general confusion of the uprising at Da Nang.

We were trucked down Highway 1 to Highway 4. From there we humped the 10 klicks to the Phong Thu area, arriving in the late afternoon. The combination of extra heavy loads, and the stress of being on constant alert for mines during a forced march, totally exhausted us. At the end of our forced march we were led into a dry rice paddy and told to dig in for the night.

I tried to pry out chunks of the baked and cracked paddy floor to make a fighting hole, but the work was so exhausting and produced such meager results that I ended up just making a poncho lean-to against the nearest paddy dike with Ron, the ammo man.

I was supposed to have gun watch at 0200. Ron and I collapsed on air mattresses under our two-man lean-to. The next thing that I was aware of was the sound of rain hitting the poncho over my head.

> 4. At 1604H, Co. H night defensive position (AT 979585) received approximately 150 rounds of 60mm and 81mm mortar fire and approximately 12 rounds of 57mm recoilless rifle fire. Mortar rounds landed in Co. H's 60mm and 81mm firing positions causing extensive casualties and damage to mortar ammunition.[5]

I've talked to other veterans over the years since the war, and quite consistently, those who served in mortar or artillery units speak of an unusual sleep anomaly that seems to be somewhat peculiar to men in those types of units, a sort of sixth sense. Sleeping near the guns, we developed an uncanny ability to drop off to sleep and to sleep through the noises of our own guns being fired for H&I missions. We found that our brains had a selective capacity to pick up on the distant muffled pops of mortars being fired at us. Our unconscious minds could ignore the explosions of our own guns being fired a few feet away from where we were sleeping, but would pick up on the incoming before the first round could hit.

On this night, my extraordinary sense failed me. Because I was so tired from the long, hot hump of a the day before, and because the enemy mortars were firing at us from so close, my sixth sense was fooled that night. What my exhausted brain thought was rain hitting my poncho was actually the sound of chunks of the rice paddy hardpan being thrown up by exploding mortar rounds. And it was light. Illumination rounds were already floating above us, hanging and swaying and hissing under their silky white parachutes.

In the stupor of my sudden awakening, the first thing that I did was to look at my watch. It was four o'clock and my instinctive first thought was to wonder who had forgotten to wake me for gun watch. The thought was fleeting. As soon as it came upon me I realized how absurd it was. I yelled at Ron that we were under attack, another obvious absurdity. I looked out my end of the poncho shelter. Tom, our gunner, was already setting up the gun. Ron and I knew that we had to get out of the relative safety of our lean-to and go to the gun. I didn't want to. I wanted to curl up as close as I could to the base of the paddy dike until this insanity stopped. I remember pleading silently, "Why doesn't someone make it stop?"

HEADQUARTERS
9th Marine Division (Rein), FMF
c/o FPO San Francisco, California 96602

2/WFD/1fk
3800
16 Apr 1966

From: Commanding Officer
To: Commanding Officer, 9th Marines

Subj: Company "H" engagement of 160410H; Report of

1. Not a shot had been fired prior to the attack. At 160400H attack commenced with 81mm and 60mm mortars, 57RR and automatic weapons. Ground attack started at same time from a distance of 200 meters in S.E. area and 300 meters in S.W. area....[6]

Ron went out of his end of our poncho shelter and I low-crawled out of my end. We got the gun and helped Tom get the tube and bipods up. Tom put the sight on the dovetail and set it to zero deflection and 800 mils elevation. That aimed the sight directly along the tube and gave us 45 degrees of elevation. Tom would look through the sight directly at the target, direct lay, something we had not very often trained to do. We had four rounds of HE at the gun. The rest of the mortar ammo was stacked about ten feet away where we had left it on the packboards.

Tom lined the gun up on a target, a recoilless rifle that he could see firing into the Company CP. Ron pulled all the increments off the rounds we had at the gun. When I dropped the first round down the tube, the only thing propelling it was the ignition cartridge, the "shotgun shell."

Our first shot was long, and Tom raised the elevation of the gun without worrying about resetting the sight. He was really doing this by instinct. My back was to the target so that I could feed the rounds down the tube. Tom was telling me what was happening. He walked the second and third rounds back toward the enemy gun. After our second round, I had heard the whoosh of a recoilless rifle round that hit somewhere near us. The last thing that Tom said to me as I dropped the fourth round down the tube was that this one should be right on them. As soon as I dropped the round, I crawled to the packboards to help Ron get some more ammo. As I did, the fourth round was still in the air.

> 4. At the beginning of the attack, 81 section commenced firing and one gun having fired 4 rounds, received a direct hit on the tube by what was later identified as a 57RR round. The 60mm mortar section received one incoming 60 or 81 mortar round in the gun pit. A total of 150 to 160 incoming 60 or 81 rounds were received, including 10x81 WP rounds, in the first 15 to 20 minutes of the attack. Upon arrival on station

of aerial observers and commencement of artillery fire, the mortar and 57RR fire ceased.[7]

The blast was the most surprising thing that has ever happened to me, before or after. All the illumination rounds had gone out at once, and I could not see the gun or Tom where they had both been a moment ago. If there had been one more round on the gun, I would have still been there at the explosion. In one instant I came to realize the fact of my own mortality.

Ron was lying right next to me in quite some pain, having taken shrapnel through his wrist. I felt for my legs and called for a corpsman who appeared as if by magic out of the darkness. I told him to take care of Tom first. He crawled a couple of feet towards where the gun had been and turned back. He said the only words that I can remember verbatim from that morning, "I can't do anything for him."

He set to work bandaging Ron and me. When he finished and left, we lay against the packboards, on the ammunition which we never got to unpack. We were tucked in relative safety next to the paddy dike that I had not wanted to leave in the first place. I looked at my watch again. Incredibly it was almost 6AM and the sunrise glow was already beginning to turn the dark into day. The battle had waned around us. We waited for the medevac choppers to take us away. I don't know where they took Ron, but I was flown to the Third Medical Battalion and then out to the hospital ship *Repose* where I spent two months recuperating from shrapnel wounds.

When I got back to the platoon in June, all of the original members who had landed with me had gone home. I felt out of sorts for the two weeks that I had to wait for orders to go home. For the first time since I joined the Corps I could say that I had more salt than anyone else in my unit and it was no consolation. It took me years to figure out why I felt so ill at ease. Simply stated, my family of the previous year and a half had gone off and left me, and I would not know for some time just how much that would affect me.

There are at least two things that I learned from that two hours in April now almost some 30 years ago.

The first is that I'm not nearly so afraid of death as I thought I was up to that time. I learned that one rather quickly. I had plenty of time to reflect upon it as I lay in the bed on the hospital ship.

It took me somewhat longer to learn the second thing, which is that we can drive ourselves crazy trying to rewrite history in our heads. For many years I was obsessed with pondering what ifs. What if I had not run over Bob with the mule? What if we had more ammo on the gun that night? What if? What if? As one pundit has said, "Whatever could have happened, did."

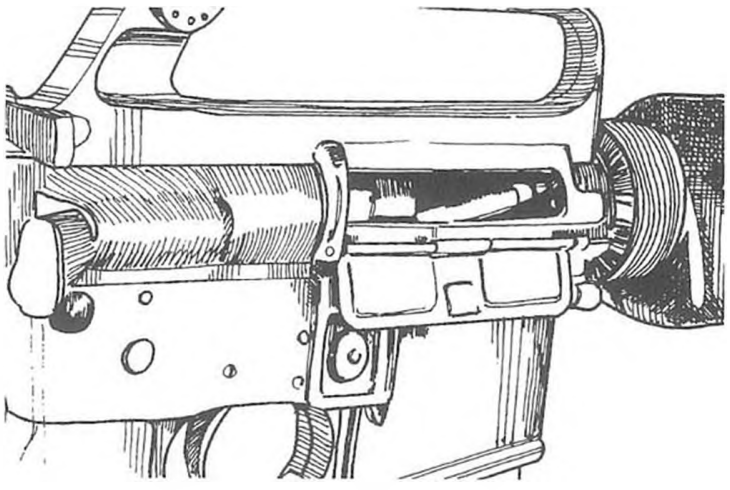
There is a scene in the movie Zulu, where a young trooper, overwhelmed at the sight of thousands of Zulu warriors sweeping down from the hills to attack him and the little band of soldiers forced to defend Rorke's Drift, pleads in astonishment, "Why is it us?" His Colour Sergeant, in a calm, steady voice gives the simple answer, "Because we're here lad. And no one else."

The history of warfare is made up mainly of actions like the one I have recalled here. What happened to Hotel Company on that April morning in 1966 has happened, with somewhat different scripts, literally millions of times throughout history. The significance of such actions is most often lost to time. Except to those of us who do remember. *Because we were there. And no one else.*

Del Pranke is married and the father of four children and two step-children, and a grandfather three times over. His life experience includes six and a half years of active duty service in the U.S. Marine Corps, including two separate tours in Viet Nam, and one year at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

NOTES

1. Situation Report Number 106 from 9th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, dated 16 April 1966 and signed by Colonel E.H. Simmons. Classified Confidential—subsequently unclassified. Source: Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC 20374-0580.
2. Jack Shulimson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: An Expanding War, 1966* (History and Museums Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps) 1982: 92.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. From 2d Bn, 9th Marines Operations summary of 16 April 1966. Enclosure (2) of SITREP 106.
6. Report of Commanding Officer, Company "H" 2nd Bn, 9th Marines, dated 16 April 1966. Attachment to 2nd Bn, 9th Marines Operational Summary.
7. *Ibid.*



Failure To Extract

Poetry by Alan Farrell

Blaming of Parts

Today we have blaming of parts. Yesterday,

That piece of shit M-16 we fucking told you wouldn't fucking work *didn't*. And
Tomorrow morning,

That phony fucking faggot chaplain—one with the peace symbol arount his neck and the goddam back-on-the-block haircut-will plant Wacziskowicz, L.J., 042 36 3842, who we found deader'n a mackerel with his fingers still around a cleaning rod slammed down the barrel of his piece and no spent brass anywhere around so he didn't like get off round one before the Dinks popped him, just like the other guy we lost down in the Delta on last operation what was his fucking name didn't last long enough to... anyway like this chaplain might even recognize Waz if he fucking tripped over him on the way to Mass Sunday I fucking told him if you slather that goddam Lubricant, Semi-Automatic all over the fucking bolt it'll fucking lock up told him that shit was no good would he listen fuck, no...But today,

We have blaming of the parts. The *nipa* palm

Tosses a sinuous, elegant neck back to peer wistfully up at the sun—triste tropism—
laying bare a polished, ebony gorge

To the wayward caress of an errant breeze, riffling the neighboring gardens,

And today we have the blaming of the parts.

This is the buffer group assembly, which ain't worth a fuck and makes your weapon give off that *spung-zzzz* sound instead of a manly smack-in-the-arm recoil like God meant it for to be these things are gonna have to be yanked out by the Battalion armorer and replaced with the new buffer group assembly as it was determined during recent combat operations that the original buffer allow the piece to function at a rate of fire sufficient that it will burn up the barrel and seize rounds in the chamber when operated as fast as scared shitless, empty-headed, sweat-soaked, fat-fingered, wishes-he-was-somewhere-else, nineteen-year-old imbecile can trigger it. And this

Is the upper sling swivel, which, as you will see, is completely fucking useless because even if it did make any fucking sense to sling this bitch, the pistol grip would dig into your ribs and hang up on your fucking Load Bearing Equipment, so you're gonna have to make some kinda catch-me-fuck-me sling out of 550-cord erroneously referred to as suspension line please pay attention to your fucking nomenclature or some other kind of webbing but do not fucking let me see you chopping up those A-21 cargo straps they cost your Government eighteen fucking dollar and fifty cent apiece and you're gonna sign a survey of fucking charges statement for eighteen fucking dollar and fifty cent if I catch you chopping up one of my A-21 cargo straps to poke through your goddam upper sling swivel. And this is the 30-round magazine

Which in your case you have not got and ain't likely to as them spit-shined pussies over in the Air Force Security Platoon got all the 30-round mags like any one of those pukes ever fired his piece or even heard a round go off. The palid fronds

Of that nipa palm hanging motionless with languorous indecision, honeyed hesitancy

Which in your case you have not got.

And this is your Selector Switch, which is always released with an easy flick of the
thumb. And
please do not let me

See any of you Hollywood hotdogs fucking filing down that detent to make a silent safety and be quick-drawing we just lost one of our fucking teddybear lieutenants that done it when we was up in Ban Me Thuot his piece spun onto full auto while he was busting brush and blew his fucking head clean off and it will happen to you don't worry about that goddam audible click Joe Gook won't hear it and you'll stay on the hit parade a lot longer.
You can do it quite easy

If you have any strength in your thumb. The airy summit of the *nipa*

With her perpetual nod of insipid assent invites warily, gingerly, coquettishly, never letting anyone see her fucking filing down that detent.

And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this

Is to open the fucking breech, as you see only this one won't open shit because it is machined to too fine a fucking tolerance and the slightest smudge of rust it rains twenny-nine days out of thirty around here or of carbon from this cheapass fucking ammo Uncle Sap contracted will lock it up tighter'n Dick's hatband so these are all gonna have to be yanked out by the Battalion armorer and replaced with the A-1 modification it is a chromed bolt with a specially machined camming surface and don't lemme see you fucking smootch that goddam LSA all over it like I done told you already. This here Charging Handle—see how it moves rapidly backwards and forwards?— will retract the

Spring and lock it at the rearward limit of its stroke: we call this

Limiting Spring Travel. And rapidly backwards and forwards ungainly,
chattering, wiry little

monkeys scamper up the serrated stalk of that slender *nipa* and they are all gonna
have to be yanked out by the Battalion armorer.

They call it limiting Travel.

They call it limiting Stroke: it is perfectly easy if you have any strength in your thumb: like the gas return port that plugs up and turns your overwrought piece of high-tech alloy into a single shot every time you forget to run a pipecleaner down that fucking aperture,

The firing pin retainer clip fifty cent little piece of cheap hardware store shit that you will lose in the tall grass and *will* drop into the mud and *will* fingerfuck in the dark and then what you got is not a Rifle, U.S., 5.56mm, M-16A1, magazine-fed, gas-operated, air-cooled, selective fire shoulder arm but a fucking broomstick cause without that gizmo it can't fire and won't nothing else fit in the little hole in there,

The ejection port dust cover which is supposed to keep dust out like dust is any fucking problem in the fucking jungle and the goddam thing pops open and hangs up on every goddam twig and briar and shit gets inside it anyhow and then you gotta take the whole fucking thing apart,

And the suppressor, which as we know don't suppress shit, and the quadrant sight

Which in our case we have not got; and the voluptuary *nipa* palm

In a silent *plié* with all the ungainly, chattering, wiry little monkeys skittering backwards and forwards along her arching back

For today we have the blaming of the parts.

ET VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST

COFFIN. Cee Oh Eff Eff Eye Enn. Ten, times two, that's twenny.

BRRZACHK. Bee Arr Arr Zee Ay Cee Aitch Kay. How Much?

Uh, lessee. Three, one, one, ten, one, three, four, five. Tha's, uh... twenny-eight.

KNIFE. Kay Enn Eye Eff Eee. Five, six, seven, four's eleven, twelve. And twenny, tha's thirty-two.

GRRATAKX. Gee Arr Arr Ay Tee Ay Kay Ecks. How much?

Hmmm... Tha's two, two, one, one, one, five, ten. So, uh... Twenny-two. An' double, tha's forty-four, plus... makes seventy-two.

FINISH. Eff Eye Enn Eye Ess Haitch. Twelve. And thirty-two, tha's forty-four.

QORAKHNEKCZ. Kew Oh Arr Ay Kay Haitch Enn Eee Kay Cee Zee. How much?

Well, lessee... Ten, thirteen, five, four, um... nine is twenny-two and, two, seven, ten, tha's thirty, and ten makes forty. And that's a triple, soooooo... Hundred and twenny plus seventy two is, uh, hundred ninety-two. Fuck!

Never play Scrabble with a montagnard.

Firs'arn Say He's Gonna Butt Fuck Me With the Bore Brush to the .50 Cal.: a Love Song

Canto the First

Major called a Battalion formation. Tol' us he was gonna hump our ass off in the field this month.

Canto the Second

Captain says if I fuck up again, my ass is grass.

Canto the Third

Lieutenant tol' me to get my ass—my "young" ass, actually—outta his office right fucking now.

Canto the Fourth

Sergeant Major says one o' these days he's gonna break me acrost his desk like a shotgun an' pump my ass till my eyes bug out.

Canto the Fifth

Firs'arn promised this morning at weapons inspection he was gonna butt fuck me with the bore brush to the .50. Twice!

Canto the Sixth

Platoon Sergeant looking for me. Says he's gonna chew my ass till it bleeds.

Canto the Seventh

Range NCO told me OK, if I wanna be a candy ass, I can go get my earplugs I left in the deuce-an'-a-half.

Canto the Eighth

Squad leader offered this morning to kick my ass aroun' the block if he see that footlocker open again during duty day.

Canto the Ninth

Girlfriend called all the way from Desmoines to tell me I was a selfish asshole. Again!

Canto the Tenth

Here's my question: What *is* it about my ass?

Alan Farrell, Dept. of Modern Languages, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden-Sydney, VA 23943.

"Hey, blue shirt with white collar!"

(Nảy áo xanh cổ trắng—tập truyện ngắn!)

A short story by Hoàng Tố Mai, Ha Noi, Viet Nam. Translated by Nguyen Quoc Vinh, Harvard University

It was only now that I had thought of revisiting the museum. Time flew, and everything had changed. The park used to look like a jungle: green islets crowded with shruberies, crumbling fences, and hissing wind day and night. Now it had become completely different, much more presentable and noisy. The museum was just like before: paintings following paintings, statues, mosaics, ceramics ... all of which combined into something not quite so smooth. I stepped into the last room feeling unsatisfied. This room had recently been opened to exhibit the paintings of a recently deceased collector. It was as small as a residential house. Paintings ran along the walls in ordered numbers. The first one had nothing special. Neither did the next one. And when I was about to pass judgment on the third one, I heard a man's slow voice: "The woman in a blue shirt with white collar." My initial feeling was that of being called by someone, but it was probably not so. I slowly turned my head to look and immediately recognized myself in the portrait. How could I have mistaken it when that shirt had been exuding a legendary blue hue. So many years it had been ....

At that time I was living with my family in a faraway communal housing project. The people there were shabby and hard-working. There wasn't even a single two-storeyed house in the whole lot. I felt that the place had nothing worth seeing except the pretty garden plot of my family. The pond here was dirty and cramped, with vegetables and duckweeds crowding out one another. Garbage could be found everywhere, in big and small piles dumped on the roadside. You have to bike several miles to get to town with its bustling streets. That was why when I was growing up, I became a girl with few demands. And I wouldn't know what to demand when I knew not the contemporary desires of fellow human beings. But perhaps I had been born like that, with no taste for big demands. Compared to my peers, I was so much more immature then that my mom had to take care of everything for me. Even with clothing, it was my mom who would go to the tailor's. If people were to ask: "What were your daughter's measurements?" my mom would reply: "She's a bit thinner and shorter than I." Those pieces of clothing would all fit, but not too nicely. I always had the feeling that it would be wonderful if they were a bit longer and wider. But that wasn't important because I personally didn't like to be noticed. I even took delight in seeing myself not quite drowned out, but not quite standing out either, in any crowd. But one time mom had to go away, very far away. After a few days she sent back a lovely piece of blue material. I had no choice but to go by myself to the tailor's. There was only a single tailor's in the whole housing project, attended by a young seamstress with long but always lowered eyes. I heard

that her husband had left in a fit of drunkeness, without taking any clothes. He hadn't returned after a whole year, and the missing person was a guy who loved his wife. No wonder, she looked so sad. After a few moments of awkwardness, I quietly put the piece of material on the table. She looked up for a while and said:

— You will have a blue shirt with white collar. Well, no need to take your measurements.

The clanky sound of the sewing machine resumed, who knows how long it would keep making that noise. I mindlessly gazed at the finished pieces of clothing on the few wooden manequins. They all looked so nice, in such glowing harmony or elegance. I concentrated on the collars because I found them rather strange: they looked like lips pouting out belated pleas: Please return, dear husband! I have been waiting for so long!

I picked up the shirt on Sunday night and wore it to school the following morning. I was late that day so in haste I lunged my bike into a guy with such a nasty face. Fuming, he was about to curse out loud but when he looked up he suddenly smiled graciously: "You are so beautiful ! Don't you care about life anymore?" At that time I was vaguely aware of the intervention of the blue shirt with white collar. Even when I got to school, everybody looked at me with such congeniality. I had never considered myself pretty, at best only "relatively easy on the eye" as in the opinion of my friends. And yet today I had been receiving wonders: unending looks and smiles from my friends. It was somewhat embarassing, but nonetheless wonderful. Somebody called me: he was a fellow student who was a few years older than I. He was intelligent but cocky. I used to be annoyed by but had to watch out for him.

— Please let me borrow the book "The House of Hazel Eyes."

— I'm afraid you wouldn't understand it.

— How haughty of you!

— But it was really hard to understand!

— Well, I'll drop by your house this afternoon to pick it up.

How disgusting! Having bumped into one another on and off for a whole year without any greeting, now he wanted to "drop by my house"! Noticing my silence, he invited me into a cafe after some reflection. In a mere afternoon I had already seen big empty holes in him. He was also rather silly when talking to the female sex, sometimes it was like the cat has gotten his tongue. It was simply the case that as the afternoon rolled by, the shirt glowed even more brightly to illuminate my countenance. Secondly, I saw that his artistic taste wasn't all that elevated. It was impossible of him to praise as excellent the song that was playing so irritatingly to my ears. It was impossible!

In the evening I took of the shirt and saw myself again in the mirror. Tomorrow morning, surely he would look at me dressed in a different outfit with apathy and embarassment for all that had happened the day before. Nonetheless the pride in me had sprung into full bloom like blossoms after spring showers. The shirt had become a symbol: many people didn't even know my name and only called out: Hey, blue shirt with white collar! It had been two years, and the shirt still looked its glowing blue with exceptional purity.

One day, I had to cross the street to buy salt. A man stopped me and asked softly:

— Little girl! Do you know why you are so beautiful?
— Oh! the blue shirt with white collar.

— How brave of you! But not quite! Won't you sit as a model?

— Oh! I'm not used to taking my clothes off.

— No. Just fully clothed like this. Hurry now! In the end, I came to where I needed to go. I was pushed into an armchair. The small room wore such a beautiful color of paint on its walls. Heavy, heavier, and then ever so lighter to turn into a lack of color at some squiggly lines.

— This shirt will be unique and so will you. Well, how about some music?

Then the stereo started.

Now I was sleeping with open eyes. Streaks of colors slowly flowed along with the gushing currents of music, crashing on in waves. Oh mom, if only it could be like this forever! If it could be like this forever! Only after a long while could I see everything stopped. The painter said with satisfaction: — You have been sitting for four hours.

Immediately there came forth a stack of money. Of course I pushed it away:

— It's meaningless when my mom is still alive. It's likely I'll accept it later but life then will have to be quite miserable.

— You are normal in your development. When will we meet again? How about five times two plus ten?

— How about minus four?

— No. It has to be that way. I'm going to sleep now.

Getting back home as the afternoon was drawing its last breath, I took off my clothes, tossing them carelessly on the line without noticing that it was getting windy. As soon as I heaved a sigh the wind would blow over the shirt: now it looked like an umbrella falling backward into the sky. The collar flapped open and shut in regrets: "I am here, I am here!" How distant was the strange and indifferent wind.

A few years thereafter I got married. He had nothing special about himself, but he was a good man. Whatever I wore he would compliment me, at worst he would say: "It looked okay on you." Life flowed along calmly until today, when a certain someone leaned back in a start against the wall of the art musuem. In full view, the woman in a blue shirt with white collar sat in the armchair, her shoulders drooped down symmetrically to the left. Her eyes looked to the distance to give quiet dissolution to her countenance. The shirt threw off strange haloes of exceptional beauty. Could it have been, me at that time? Who wouldn't know that a beautiful portrait expresses the infinite sentiment of the author toward the model. But here it was the magical blue shirt. Perhaps it was both I and it that lifted one another so high up, flying across myriads of miles and then tranquilly falling into this painting.

Twenty years it had been. Right. Five times two plus ten without minussing anything. Someone called me again: Hey, blue shirt with white collar!

Ba-De or Her Doomed family (from "l'Homme de nulle part")

Pham Van Ky
Translated by Tony D. Guzewicz

A young Tonkin peasant girl sang while she worked in the fields cutting grass. At high noon, she called her only confidant, the moon, where she could make out the legendary profile of little master Cuoi, eternally seated at the foot of his banyan tree.

Thang Cuoi seated at the foot of the banyan tree negligently allows his buffaloes to graze on rice plants and in a loud voice calls to his father.

His mother is busy cutting grass in heaven.

As for his father, he has left on horseback in search of a fairy.

—Oh, lucky father, she says to herself, at a time when all men were waging war over hill and dale.

In fact, it was during the Le reign by the recent rise of the Trinh people. An internal struggle between the two families in which everyday acts of robbery were common.

Do Hai itself, the costal village where the young peasant girl was born, was accessible to Chinese pirate junks. Atop a watch tower, built on a knoll, from time to time one could hear the dismal sound of the watchman's tocsin sounding the warning.

Next to the weak fortifications surrounding the village, nature also seemed to be ready for combat with its aloe spears and barbed-wire swords of pine.

But the young, carefree peasant girl, between two alerts, sang songs of youth. The kind where you feel life pass over your body like delicate hands, subtle yet daring at the same time.

***

One day more beautiful than the rest, a big Chinese war junk was sailing from the southwest with all its sails hoisted, heading toward the bay of Ha-Long. Suddenly, at the outskirts of the village, it turned and headed toward a remote area of the coast and anchored.

Atop the tower, the watchman was dozing and had not seen it. He was sleeping like a log. The alarm whistled like a harp, the wind violently echoed through its casing. No alert was given. Trusting men and animals were sleeping in the torpor, taking their afternoon nap.

Only the peasant girl in the middle of the fields was awake and singing. You could not say who was singing louder: she, imitating verses with the rhythm of her sickle, or the shining sun which filled the air, bursting like a Chinese trumpet.

From the ship presently moored behind the rocks, a rickety sampan cowered away and rowed out to shore. Five men jumped out on the beach. Walking in front was a young lord in a violet robe with a heraldic stork on it. On his head he wore a cap adorned with jade and pearls and on his feet sandals with white soles. Behind him came his meager retinue, some holding green parasols high in the air, others waving red and blue banners trimmed with yellow fringe: four guards with their white trousers and boots wearing black silk tunics clinched at the waist with a mauve scarf. They wore woven straw cone hats covered with lacquer ornaments and tied at the chin by braids of orange silk.

All the colors of the rainbow were among this harmonious squad which had just cleared the first line of defense laughing as they did.

Atop the tower, the watchman continued to snore, making noises like the sound of the surf. The alarm still whistled like a harp caressed by the wind. The village remained swamped in the high tide of the siesta, like some legendary city awash on the sea.

All alone, the grass-cutting peasant girl was singing her song of youth.

The young master, entranced by her melodious voice, listened to her with interest, then led off in her direction. He soon found her.

Both radiant and terrified, she made a deep, low bow. Right away, he reassured her that he and his men meant no harm, telling her that he was the prince of the Trinh people and had no intention of pillaging the region. Tired from his few days voyage at sea, he only wanted to relax there.

Finding courage almost to the point of recklessness, she led him to the summit of a hill where a banyan tree spread the long, spindle of its whispy shadow on the grass, like a bed spread out infinitely into the night. The sun was about to set below the horizon, and the sky glowed red as though slashed with secret wounds.

The prince signaled his guards to leave. Remaining alone, he curiously studied the young peasant girl. In reality, she was not beautiful. Yet, her voice was as hot, hot as the flesh that he had just brushed up against. She trembled and lowered her eyes. Then he did better. He put his strong arms around her waist with the authority of a man used to giving orders and being obeyed. But she broke loose of his hold, violently.

Seeing this brocade he wore and the pleats of his dirty-brown calico tunic, feeling his aristocratic soft skin against her own callous from thankless toiling, she grew frightened and cried.

Careful not to rush things, he asked her to sit near him. In order to persuade her, he whispered gentle verses in her ear:

> Girl with the long, silky hair,
> with arms white as ivory,
> with eyes bright as a knife splitting an areca nut,
> with a mouth laughing like a wild flower,
> You are fine gold and I am bronze,
> You are the Thien Ly flower, I, the common nelumbo...

He lay his head on her shoulder and inhaled the fragrance of her hair scented with coconut oil, hair he slowly undid and let fall to the ground in thick waves.

The sun set blood red, the sky opened like the first wound of a virgin. Dusk settled with all the force of the conspiratorial whispering wind. Night followed, filled with all the desires of men.

The prince continued to look at her. He hovered over her like dusk over day. He saw her head thrown back, pulled down by the irresistible flow of her hair; her white and palpitating throat given up to the sky, the toes of her bare feet clenched in the grass. He moved nearer her and heard her sigh with her eyes closed, her breath bated. He laid her on the ground. She tried to resist, begged, and cried. She cried again but no longer begged. Then, silence...

On the beach, high tide had slowly gone out, laying bare a milky sheen of sand. Throughout the night seashells echoed endlessly, conch shells resounding with the rumbling surf and wind.

***

At dawn the following day, the young peasant girl woke with a start beneath the banyan tree. The prince had disappeared.

Near her, a gold ingot glittered in the grass. She picked it up and despite herself, hefted its weight, then threw it in the bushes. Yet, with this gold, what relief she could bring to her people, poor fishermen who lived day to day!

She felt offended "no one would pay the lowest prostitute any differently!" If the prince knew how to take, he had no idea how to give.

Wounded in flesh and spirit, she picked up her sickle, balanced her basketful of grass on her head and headed home. Her parents must have looked for her all night, worried beyond all reason. What lie was she going to invent?...

Way off on the sea, pierced by the first light of dawn, shadows swept across the sea, as the war junk sailed away.

Atop the tower, the watchman having finally seen the junk, jumped to his feet and sounded the alarm. But since it was speeding past the coast sailing hard toward the bay of Ha-Long, he decided that alerting the village was useless. He was right. Soon, the ship melted into the distance like a lump of sugar.

***

From that day on, the young peasant girl seemed to have lost her voice. Of course, villagers fear silence as much as war. Silence is just like waiting. And what was there to wait for in those troubled times, besides the constant raids and deaths. At all costs, people had to sing and give each other courage. They all hummed their melodious song of months:

In January, we celebrate the New Year in our homes...
In February, we play games of money...
In March, we feast.
In April, we plant beans,
We celebrate the Doan Ngu festival, and then it's May...

And then indeed, it was May that brightened the fields... Three months had gone by since the prince had left.

On her way home one night, with a basket of grass balanced on her head, the young peasant girl suddenly felt the sky sway and the ground give way under her feet. Strange vapors clouded her vision. Her ears rang like those little bells tied on a horse's neck. Then, something in her stomach moved!

Terrified, she raised her arms as if to hold up the sky about to fall. But she was the one who fell heavily to the ground.

At dusk, her mother found her unconscious. She revived her then and there and took her back to the house.

All the women knew what was happening. She guessed, but at first didn't care to believe it. Doubt gave way to suspicion. Suspicion gave way to proof. Nonetheless, the mother questioned her daughter, hoping she would deny it. Not at all! The guilty girl confessed and she told the whole story of her adventure in minute detail.

Was it possible? The watchman would surely have given the alert. Was it only a ghost junk? The old woman thought about immaculate conceptions, about the white elephant that pierced Maya, mother of the Kapilavastu Buddha... Perhaps, her daughter was only pregnant in her imagination? Maybe she carried nothing more than a dream in her belly? Nothing more than the image of little master Cuoi? Had she not said, among other things, that it happened under a banyan tree? But she had also said that the child moved!

This detail was worth believing. She was crazy to doubt it! Her daughter was pregnant!

She howled with rage, beat her, cursed her, and ranted about the shame that would fall upon their family.

Without waiting, she told her old husband about this tragedy. A family meeting took place at nightfall.

Around the table sat her grandfather, wrinkled like the trunk of a cinnamon tree and bent like a rainbow; her toothless grandmother who, when she would laugh once a year during the Tet holiday, was all the more frightening... Her great uncle and his concubine were also there; they didn't say much and opened their mouths only to condemn her. And, finally, there were her uncle and aunt who only spoke in proverbs!

None of them had ever comitted a sin in their lives. They were without reproach. And of course, merciless.

In a muffled voice, her great uncle invoked the local law of the village which punished all offenses of this nature with a fine of two hundred sacks of Chinese coins and also demanded the sale of the illegitimate child when it reached its first birthday.

—This will be our ruin, her grandmother gasped.

—Shame for three generations, her uncle added!

And grandfather, considered head of the family, concluded:

—Our child's indecent behavior has ruined us. Her filial duty must save us. He went on:

—All that, of course, in complete secrecy. Let's hope none of this comes to light in the village! Our honor is at stake!

The condemned girl on her knees crying hard, begged for one favor:

—I submit to the death sentence, but please allow me to pray alone to Buddha until morning.

The family agreed and went to bed.

In great haste, her aged father ran to look for two discreet sampaners for hire and found them. Their deal concluded, he gave them two sacks of Chinese coins and set to meet them at dawn.

At dawn, in a remote spot on the coast, the same place where the prince had gone ashore, the condemned girl was led to be executed. Serene, with dry eyes, as if transfigured by that night.

With clasped hands, she murmured once more the prayer which had, in days of old, been found written on banana leaves:

> Oh Buddha who arose, haloed with glory and shining with virtue, from
> the fathomless abyss out of an endless succession of existences...
> I worship you!
> Oh You, who, by your precepts and examples, extinguished among
> us the terrible fire of anger and passion...
> I worship you!
> Supreme perfection, perfect knowledge, limitless kindness, Buddha
> I worship you!

—It is time, her father said.

Then, the two executioners brutally seized the girl people will later call Ba-De to honor her memory. They tied her with rope and hung rocks around her neck.

Before they stuffed stones in her mouth to keep her from crying out, she turned toward her parents and said:

—I atone for my mistake without complaint. I want to preserve our family honor. But you still doubt the truth of my confession. That denies all peace to my soul... Well, may Buddha hear me! May I shortly reappear on the water, despite the rocks which weigh me down, and may Buddha let my innocence shine out by this miracle.

The sampan left the shore.

Her father raised his eyes toward the sky. Her mother lowered hers toward the ground, for she was crying.

A moment later, the small boat was nothing but a black speck on the rolling sea.

Out on the ocean, the executioners dropped their cargo overboard as one would a mortal sin.

Then, the miracle came to pass. The body rose up from the water!

But the frightened men brutally drove their boat hooks into it, and it sank out of sight again. Never more to be seen!

The black speck on the wave-tossed sea grew larger. The sampan landed, but the doomed parents looked at it without seeing...

Only the black speck on the rolling sea hung in their heart. That dark speck will survive them and haunt the third generation.

Just like an indelible spot.

"Remembrance of the Countryside"

Nguyen Huy Thiep. Translated by Dana Sachs and Nguyen Van Khang.

*From **Van Nghe** magazine, Issue 41, October 9, 1993.*

I am Nham. I was born in a village and grew up in a village. If you're on Route 5 and looking toward my village, you'll only see a small green spot in the yellow fields. You can vaguely see the outline of the Dong Son mountains, which seem close but are actually 50 kilometres away. My village is near the ocean, and in the summer an ocean breeze blows through.

The fifth month of the moon calendar is the harvest time. My mother, my Brother's wife Ngu, Uncle Phung, and I are out in the fields by dawn. Those three cut, and I haul the rice.

I haul the rice home, following the edge of the path by the ditch. It's very bright outside, probably 40 degrees. The dry mud at the edge of the ditch is bent and broken like rice crackers.

I'm very dreamy, always thinking. My father is a major in the navy, a middle-ranking technician who travels to many islands setting up radar instruments. Once every year he gets permission to come home. My father knows the names of all the islands by heart. My mother has never gone far from our village. She says, "Everywhere's the same. In every place, there's just people." Uncle Phung is different. He's been to a lot of places and when he and I are alone together, he tells me, "Within the universe there's not just people. There are saints and there are devils." Uncle Phung's family is all women: his wife's mother, his wife, and four daughters. Uncle Phung jokes: "I am the most handsome person in the family."

Ngu is my sister-in-law, married to my older brother Ky, who works in the Tinh Tuc iron mines in Cao Bang. Ngu is the daughter of Teacher Quy, the village elementary school teacher. I used to study with him. He has a lot of books. Everybody calls him, "the eccentric scholar." They also say, "He's an old goat," and "Quy the goat." Teacher Quy has two wives. The first wife gave birth to Ngu, my sister-in-law, and the second, Aunt Nhung, who both sews clothes and keeps a small shop, is the mother of my friend Van. Aunt Nhung used to be a prostitute in Hai Phong. After teacher Quy married her, there was nothing left of his reputation.

I haul ten loads of rice, which fill the courtyard. Then I call Minh to pile the straw to make room for the rice. Minh is my little sister, skinny and dark, but bright-eyed and tough. She comes out of the kitchen, her face red, her clothes soaked with sweat.

I go out to the barrel of rain water, fill a coconut shell, and drink it in a few gulps. The water is cool. My mother often eats rice with rain water and salted eggplant. My mother can't eat fatty meat.

The courtyard is scorching, and it feels like the air is steaming, oppressive with the smell of rice.

Rice husks lay haphazardly across the village paths. When I walk by Aunt Luu's gate I see a crowd of people. Aunt Luu's daughter Mi calls , "Nham!" The village postman, Ba Ven, is cramming letters and newspapers into the canvas bag on the back of his bicycle. Mi tells me, "We have a telegram from Quyen in Hanoi."

Aunt Luu is my mother's younger sister, who's been paralyzed for years. Her husband Uncle Sang is a transportation engineer working in Laos. Uncle Sang's older brother in Hanoi has a daughter, Quyen, who's been studying at university in America. She came to visit when she was a child.

I hold the telegram in my hand and read: "Aunt Luu send someone to come meet me at the station at 2 o'clock on—" I ask Mi, "This afternoon?" Mi nods her head.

Aunt Luu is lying with her back against the wall. She's been lying like that for the past six years. She says, "Nham, help me by going to meet Quyen at the station, okay?"

I say, "My family's harvesting the rice."

"Leave it for a while. Which plot are you harvesting?"

"Red Fetus Plot," I tell her.

Mi carries the telegram out to the fields to talk to my mother. Mi is the same age as my sister Minh, but lighter skinned and more solid. She talks a lot, and demands a lot of attention. "Hey, Nham," she says. "One day will you make a bamboo picker so I can get some guavas?" You make it from fresh bamboo, with a head like a fish trap with open teeth.

I tell Minh, "You have to find the bamboo."

"I found it already. Do it tomorrow, okay?"

I calculate in my head the things I need to do, and see I'm going to be busy from early morning until late at night. Mi says, "Tomorrow."

I say, "Yeah." Her house has three guava trees. One time she climbed one of them and the branch broke and she just barely missed falling.

Uncle Phung reads the telegram and says, "What's this SNN post office? What does it mean?"

My mother says, "Nham, Aunt Luu asked you to go, then go. I put your new shirt in the trunk. Take it out and wear it."

I tell Mi, "Go home. I have to cut rice until noon. I'll go right after lunch."

Mi goes home alone. Her shadow sinks little by little into the field, which is rough with the stubble of the just-cut rice. I hold the sickle, gather the rice in an arc around me close to the roots, and pull sharply. I go one step to the left. Gather again. Pull sharply. Go one step to the left again. Gather again. Pull sharply again. Like that. Like that forever. The earth in the field is wet, and you can hear the tick tack sound of tiny grasshoppers dancing.

By noon, the fields are empty. Looking out I can see only the four people in my own family still out in the fields. My mother sits at the edge, pulling thorns from her foot. Ngu, wearing a conical hat, a scarf over her face, and with her legs wrapped from the ankles to the thighs for protection, is looking dreamily toward the far row of the Dong Son mountains. Uncle Phung is collecting rice to haul home. He says, "Are you going home now?" My mouth is so dry I can't speak, so I only nod my head. The two of us, each with one load, head home. Uncle Phung goes in front, and I go behind. The loads of rice are heavy. My feet are shaking but I try to walk anyway. One hundred steps. Two hundred steps. One thousand steps. Two thousand steps. Like that. Like that forever. Then we get home.

Minh sets out my lunch and then hurries to carry it out to the field for my mother and Ngu.

Lunch is rice with boiled vegetables, salted eggplant, and preserved fish. I eat six bowls of rice without stopping. Now I'm tired. If not, I would eat a lot more.

I go out to the well to wash and change my clothes. I take out the new shirt and put it on, but I feel self-conscious and have to stop. I end up putting on my father's faded shirt from the army instead. Then I walk over to Aunt Luu's house to get the bicycle. Aunt Luu says, "Take a little money." She hands me five thousand but I only take two. Two thousand is worth more than a kilo of rice. Aunt Luu asks, "Do you remember Quyen's face?" I nod, though actually I don't remember well, but when I meet her I'll recognize her.

I ride the bicycle to the station. From my village to the station is eight or nine kilometres. It's been a long time since I've gone that far.

The dirt path follows the edge of the village past the village meeting house, past the lotus pond, then along the side of a ditch back toward the town seat. I'm thinking. But my ideas aren't clear.

I'm thinking
I'm thinking about the simplicity of words
Forms of expression are too powerless
While exhaustion fills the world
Shameless injustice fills the world
Desolate fates fill the world
How many months pass by
How many lives pass by
No word has the skill to describe it
Who will gather this morning for me
Gather the empty light from my little sister's eyes
Gather the grey hairs from my mother's head
Gather the vain hopes from the heart of my brother's wife
And gather the smell of poverty from the countryside
I snipe at every idea
I look for a way to chase it into a cage
And I scream in the fields of my heart
Howl like a wolf
I try to harvest some part of a life
And tie it loosely with a band of words
I howl in the fields of the body
I gather the light from the eyes of life
Which are watching the light in my own eyes
Looking into the world of consciousness
The distant and immeasurable world of consciousness
Although I understand
It means nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing at all.

The train station is empty in the afternoon. A few chickens stand in the courtyard. About 10 people are waiting at the entrance. There's the sound of music coming from a cassette somewhere. The voice of the singer Nha Phuong slowly sings: "You passed through my life. Do you remember anything? My darling, you passed through my life. Do you remember anything?" Noodle

soup sellers, refreshment sellers. Everywhere there are shops selling clothes, shoes, sugar and milk, cigarettes. Cars running back and forth.

The sky is so clear. Blazing. The whole town has sunstroke.

The train's whistle sounds hesitant and happy from far away. Someone calls, "The train's coming." The whole town is still dreamy. Then someone yells again, "The train's coming," and now the train sounds intimidating and shrill. Everybody's suddenly excited. Old women, young women, children selling things, all running back and forth. The sound of the sellers competing with each other. "Water here!" "Bread!" "Drinks!" "Bread!" "Drinks!"

I stand with my bicycle watching. The passengers are standing and sitting in a crowd at the door of the train. This is a local stop. My countryside is anonymous. The place where I stand is anonymous.

About ten people file one after another through the ticket entrance and I recognize a few teachers from the district high school. A soldier. A few traders. A few steelworkers. A fat man wearing dark glasses which still have the sticker on them. A tall thin youth, hair as brittle as the roots of bamboo, and intense eyes. I know him. He's the poet Van Ngoc. After Ngoc comes an old couple. Quyen.

Quyen's hair hangs down. She wears a T-shirt, jeans, glasses, and a bag over her shoulder. Among all the other people, Quyen's appearance is completely different.

Quyen walks through the ticket gate and looks around. She recognizes me immediately. Quyen says, "I'm Quyen. Did Aunt Luu send you to pick me up?"

"Yes," I say.

Quyen smiles. "Thank you. How are you related to Aunt Luu?" What's your name?"

"I'm Nham. I'm the son of Hung," I tell her.

"Do we share any common ancestors?"

"No."

Quyen nods her head. "Good. Aunt Luu hired you, then?"

I look at my shadow, dark in the cement, my heart sad. Me, it's my destiny, everywhere people always see me as someone for hire.

The afternoon passes slowly. Shadows run after each other across the ground. The afternoon empties the spirit of anyone who hopes to prove that anything has meaning.

Quyen asks, "How many *sao* does your family plant? One *sao* harvests how much rice? How much money do you make?"

I tell her, "Every *sao* harvests more than three *noi*, nearly a *ta* (100 kilos). Every kilo of rice sells for 1400."

Quyen calculates. "Twenty million tons of rice for 60 million people."

I say, "Who only thinks about eating?"

Passing the lotus pond we meet Thieu the monk. Brother Thieu says hello. I say hello to him. Brother Thieu says, "I remembered to set aside some *tu cau* roses for you."

I say, "I'd like to come by the pagoda to get them sometime." I love flowers. Teacher Quy always says, "That's the pleasure of a person who understands life."

Brother Thieu asks, "Want to take a few lotus flowers to put in a vase?" This season the pagoda's lotus pond has a lot of flowers.

I park the bike to push the boat out for Brother Thieu. The basket boat can only hold one person sitting down. The paddle splashes the water. Quyen says, "I want to go on the boat," so I call to Brother Thieu.

He rows the boat back in.

Brother Thieu carries a bunch of lotus flowers up to the bank. Quyen climbs into the boat and I push her back out.

Brother Thieu says, "Pampering people brings trouble to us." I laugh. He and I sit on the bank. The afternoon continues to pass slowly. Bright yellow sunshine. My heart is empty and wide, so empty, an empty expanse.

Quyen comes up the bank and Brother Thieu invites us to eat lotus root. "Is it good?" he asks.

"It's good," she says.

We linger a little and then go home. Brother Thieu says goodbye. Quyen says goodbye to him. Quyen carries the bunch of lotus flowers. Brother Thieu looks hesitantly after us for a moment.

I go in front. Quyen goes behind. She asks me about Brother Thieu.

The Story of Brother Thieu

Brother Thieu was an orphan. In his fifteenth year someone looked at his strange physiognomy and told him, "You must go into the monkhood. There's no place in this world to hold you." Brother Thieu followed this advice, then he travelled to many different places, seeking to learn from great intellectuals, but he never got a chance. Brother Thieu said, "Now Buddha is living in a place which has no Buddha." Then he said:

"Religion that's not intellectualized suits people;
People who don't intellectualize are suited to religion."

Brother Thieu discovered the foundation of an old pagoda, then he mobilized the community's resources to help restore it. Unexplainably, it was called Bach Xi Tu (White Tooth Pagoda)*. Brother Thieu often read poetry. There was a line [Chinese]:

"Co luan doc chieu giang son tinh
Tu tieu nhat thinh thien dia kinh"

which means:

"Only one orbit of light, the mountain and river are quiet
Only one sudden sound of laughter, the earth and heaven are afraid."

There was another line [Chinese]:

"Lo phung kiem khach tu trinh kiem
Bat thi thi nhan mac hien thi"

which means:

"If you meet a swordsman, you should show him your sword
If you're not a poet, don't present your poetry."

*in Vietnamese the term "white tooth" carries three meanings: 1) white tooth 2) meaninglessness 3) youth.

Brother Thieu said, "Buddha teaches humanity one way of entering the monkhood practically, by trying to rediscover one's original character. Buddha is too practical, so not everyone understands."

Quyen and I get home. Aunt Luu, with her eyes full of tears, cries, "Niece! Oh, niece!"

Quyen sits on the edge of the bed and says, "My mother and father remembered the anniversary of grandfather's death, but they're busy and can't come back. They sent you and uncle a little money."

Aunt Luu says, "We don't need money. We only need feeling."

Quyen takes 5 million dong out of her purse and gives it to Aunt Luu. Quyen says, "I'm giving Mi a shirt."

Mi smiles shyly. "Thank you," she says.

I tell Aunt Luu, "I'm going home." Then I stuff her two thousand dong under her pillow and leave.

At home they're husking the rice. Ngu asks, "Is little Quyen pretty?"

"Yes," I tell her.

By the time dinner is over, it's dark. Outside, it's pouring. Thunder resounds in the sky. My whole family runs around pulling the rice out from under the leaks in the ceiling. By the time we've finished everything I look at the clock and it's already 11:00. It's still raining. Suddenly I feel anxious in my heart and I can't sit still. I say to my mother, "I want to go out to the fields to catch frogs. In a rain like this there'll be a lot of frogs."

My mother says, "You're not afraid of the thunder and lightening, child?" I laugh. My mother doesn't understand my laugh at all. I laugh like a bandit, like a debt collector, like a devil. I laugh at my fingernails and toenails. Why are they so long and black like that?

The Rhyme for Catching Frogs

The soul of the frog has returned
I had lain on the dry ground, now I go to the field's edge
Which is only holes and burrows
No blankets, no mats, misery in a hundred forms
I pray for March to come
With one big rain I can go outside
Outside is so spacious and relaxed
In rain or sun I can always look for food
Before, I still strived to improve myself
Unsuccessful, I was humbled
I see a boy with nearly black skin
He only stands and looks without speaking
I see a boy with very black skin
One hand with a fishing rod, one with a basket
He wears a conical hat
With a scarf wrapped around his head looking pretty

He carries a fan in his hand
He carries a bamboo pipe full of bait
He carries a slender rod
With a long red line
I just sat down at the edge of the sweet potato field
He jerks his rod and breaks my jaw
Mother! Get me medicine
Get me the leaves of chili and the *xuong song* herb
I am in the deepest hole
At the edge of the morning glory pond next to the raft
Bamboo Shoot Boy is the son of Uncle Bamboo Tree
He catches me to take home to dry and skin
The Welsh Onion Boy goes with the Flowering Onion Boy
Add a fistful of salt, so hot, so bitter
Oh Buddha come down to me
Gather the martyred soul of the frog and fly back to heaven
A lifetime mixes tears and laughter
The life of a frog and the life of a person so hot, so bitter. .

The fields are empty. Only the sound of frogs croaking. The sound of toads echoing loudly, and the murmur of insects.

It rains.

It rains continuously.

I hold the flashlight, my feet treading randomly on the wet rice stubble. There are a lot of frogs, stunned by the light, and you only need to pick them up and put them in the basket. Thunder resounds in the sky. Lightening flashes light. The universe opens without limits. The wind roars, sounding like thousands of birds flapping their wings over my head. Suddenly my soul is seized by a feeling of terror. Very clearly, I see a great image gliding quickly and moving violently over my head. I lie down on the ground, stupified, gasping. I feel certain that the invisible power hovering above me understands everything absolutely, justly, clearly, defending the inherent goodness of the human soul. It has the ability to comfort and soothe each person's fate. It brings me peace.

I was right
I am at peace because I chose this form of expression
The form is difficult, mediocre, meaningless, and vain
To add lustre to the value of human knowledge
In these deserted fields
The deserted fields of stupidity and defiant cruelty
Who's there?
Who plays the plaintive flute at night?
And which bright souls, which dark souls are searching for the way
Which faint breath
Which faint laughter
Emerges screeching out of white teeth
Which whispers
Meaningless groans of insects
Sounds of the cowherd's flute, which are tiny but carry
Wandering through the fields of the heart
Wandering through the fields of the body
Which wanderer survives
Which soulmates listen closely
Which origins remind
Strumming musical sounds
On this dark night who remains awake
Who wanders through the fields of this immense and miserable world?

Little by little the rain stops. I go around this field, around that field. The frogs have disappeared. Sometimes I can only see one salamander (nhai ben) quickly following the canal of water. On the horizon in the direction of Dong Son I see the flicker of a fire. I feel like

I'm lost. I don't know what time it is but suddenly I hear the crow of the chickens, the desolate crow of the chickens falling and rising in no order at all. For a long time I don't see any frogs, then suddenly I realize that somehow I've come to the place where the canal meets the Cam River. Alone in the sky is the morning star.

It's dawn when I return to the village. The air is clean. The village is familiar and quiet. After the rain, the landscape seems both elegant and pure.

Crossing by Aunt Nhung's house, I stand still. The house is situated close to the side of the road. The thatch screen opens. Someone's shadow slips hurriedly out. Whoever it is looks in front and behind then runs quickly and hides behind the streblus tree. A thief? I'm about to yell when I realize it's Uncle Phung. A moment later, Aunt Nhung opens the door and steps tranquilly out, wearing a nightgown. Nhung is over 30, her body well-proportioned and beautiful.

I carry the bag of frogs down the road after Uncle Phung. When we get to a bend, he glances back and sees me. He says, "Were there many frogs?" I don't answer. Uncle Phung is a bit startled. He insists, "Why are you being like that?" I suddenly feel a gnawing sadness. I'm sad for Aunt Nhung, sad for Uncle Phung, sad for Teacher Quy. I'm sad for myself.

Uncle Phung walks away as if he doesn't care. I go home. It turns out that I only have about twenty frogs. Ngu says, "That wasn't worth the effort. So few and you were out all night."

My mother laughs, "He probably both caught frogs and slept in the fields."

Minh is preparing to go to school for the summer activities. She wears blue pants and a white blouse, which are her nicest clothes, the ones she only wears on holidays. She whispers in my ear, "I know where you went, but I won't tell. You didn't go catch frogs." She laughs. I look into her eyes. She *knows*, but I have no way to suspect that in only a few hours I will have to cry for her. She *knows*, simply because it's almost like she's experienced things and understands. Until that moment, the moment when she dies, she has only four more hours to joke and understand everything completely.

My mother says, "Child, take some frogs over to Teacher Quy's so he can drink whiskey with them."

I say, "Okay," then I go bathe.

My mother and Ngu go out to the fields to harvest peanuts, which is also my job in the mornings.

On the way to Teacher Quy's house, I go by Aunt Luu's and Quyen yells, "Hey, What's-Your-Name!"

I say, "I'm Nham. Where did Mi go?"

"Mi went to school. Wherever you're going, let me go with you."

We go to Teacher Quy's.

The Story of Teacher Quy: Teacher Quy taught elementary school, had a generous nature, and had been reading books ever since he was small. When he grew up and his parents chose a wife for him, he said to her, "Don't marry me or you'll have a miserable life."

She said, "Even miserable, I'll still marry you."

Teacher Quy said, "If you marry me, first, you can't be afraid of poverty. Second, you can't be afraid of humiliation. Third, you can't be jealous. Fourth, you have to respect decency."

She said, "If you respect decency, then the other three are easy." The couple got married and lived in harmony together. Later, Teacher Quy lost his job because he couldn't bear to follow the textbooks, and taught with proverbs and popular songs instead. One time he went to Hai Phong to administer a test, and he met a pregnant prostitute who had no place to deliver her baby, so he brought her home to be his second wife. The first wife didn't say anything, even contributed money to build another house. Wife number two wasn't faithful, and still had relationships with a lot of men, but Teacher Quy ignored it. He only said, "Whoever you sleep with, remember to get some money out of him. If there's no money, then take rice, or a pig or a duck. Don't sleep with someone for nothing." The whole village laughed at him, but Teacher Quy still ignored it. Teacher Quy often drank whiskey. Whiskey went in and poetry came out. There were a lot of poems that were pretty good.

Teacher Quy is at home by himself, lying on a hammock reading a book. Quyen and I say hello. He gets up and hurries to make tea. We sit on a bamboo bed under the shade of the pergularia trellis. The teacher asks Quyen, "Miss, if you study at university in America who is it useful for?"

Quyen says, "It's useful for me, useful for my family, useful for the country."

Teacher Quy smiles, "Don't think about usefulness. It'll only exhaust you."

We eat taro dipped in sesame and salt. When Teacher Quy shoves a book under the mat, Quyen says, "If you do that, you'll crush the book and ruin it."

Teacher Quy laughs, "If I crush it, it's nothing. You read books to have knowledge. Having knowledge is for having a life which has meaning."

The sunlight filters through the trees, scattering traces of light on the ground. Teacher Quy and Quyen and I are all quiet. I want to go out into the fields. Quyen says, "Coming back this time I really want to have a correct impression of the countryside. Wherever you go, let me go with you." I hesitate.

Teacher Quy laughs, "She's a woman. How can you refuse a woman?"

We say goodbye to Teacher Quy and go into the fields. Quyen says, "The fields are so wide. Do you know where they begin?"

The fields began in a place very deep in my heart
Within my own flesh and blood there were fields
From over here, the fields were immense and limitless
From over there, the field were limitless and immense
How can I ever forget the place where my mother gave birth to me
My mother used a thread to wrap the stem of my umbilical cord
Washed me in pond water
I knew that crying was useless because everything must wait
Must wait from January to December
In January plant beans, in February plant eggplants
I have passed along so many wrong paths
I have passed through so many hardships, vulgarities

I must plant and harvest in this field
I must know by heart the names of so many kinds of bugs
And the field is sometimes rainy, sometimes sunny
Some places are shallowly raked and some are deeply ploughed
Then one day
(an inauspicious and ominous day)
A woman came and made me miserable
She taught me the custom of unfaithfulness in love
By betraying me like she would betray anyone
I silently buried my hatred at the end of the fields
In a difficult vein of the fields, shaped like the curve of a sword
Flowers of hope withered in my hand
Work became heavier than before
I sold produce at a price too cheap
I have had several big harvests
And also failed completely several times
When the afternoon passed, twilight was quiet
I had no time to see the scars on my body
I only knew that I was wounded
Night
The stars burned candles in the sky
I covered myself with a shroud which smelled of my comrade
At that moment, Oh friend, Oh my young friend
Please understand me
I tried to make the fields so fertile

I lead Quyen past the auxiliary crops. She asks, "How much has the local price for agricultural products changed this year?"

"It's gone up 0.4 percent," I tell her.

"That'll kill you! Industrial products rose 2.2 percent," she says. "What's the price of fertilizer?"

I tell her, "Nitrogen increased 1.6 percent. Phosphorous increased 1.4 percent."

"Do you use electricity here?" she asks.

"No."

"The price of electricity rose 2.2 percent."

Around ten o'clock in the morning the fields get crowded with women and children. They're the main source of labor. The men around here are adventurous. They have a lot of illusions and nurse dreams of getting rich, so they often take off for the city to look for work or to do business. There are even some people who risk going as far as the center of the country to dig for gold or rubies. They don't strike it rich but when they come back to the village, their characters have changed. They've become like wild and dangerous beasts. Uncle Phung is a person like that.

The Story of Uncle Phung: Nguyen Viet Phung, the child of a poor family, went through secondary school and then quit. Phung had a number of professions: ploughman, builder, carpenter, oxcart driver. When he was 20 he went into the army. Three years later he came back to the village and got married. His wife is four years older than him, and gave birth to four girls in three years (the third time being twins). Phung was determined to get rich, so he sold all the furniture in his house for two gold rings which he carried to the center of the country to dig for gold. For a year, there was no news at all, and then out of nowhere he returned, thin as the corpse of a cicada, his face swollen like a gong. He lay down on the bed and his hardworking wife had to take care of him for the next six months. The poor family became poorer. After his battle with illness, Phung's manner changed. There was the time he stabbed someone, scaring everyone in the village. There was also the time he suddenly started crying, putting his hands together in prayer and prostrating himself before his wife and daughters. Luckily, after that, his wife's parent's moved to the city to live with their son who had just returned from abroad. They gave the family the house with three *sao* of land and that changed their lives. Phung's wife is resourceful, good at raising animals, and also at making and selling tofu. Every one of those four daughters endures a lot to help her mother. At home, Phung chose one room for himself and he forbids his wife and children from entering it. Sometimes he still goes with Nhung and a few of the local matrons. Phung's wife and daughters ask, "Why do you avoid us?" Phung says, "There's nothing valuable that's close to me. My flesh is poison. Biting me is a bite that would poison a dog. I love all of you. All I want is for you to be clean."

Quyen and I pass a peck of land in the middle of the fields. At the bottom, castor-oil plants and thorny amaranth grow abundantly. There is even corn with red flowers and green leaves. Quyen asks, "Why is it called a peck of land?"

I tell her, "In the past, King Ba Vanh dug this pit as a space in which to count the number of soldiers he had, in the same way that we would measure rice."

"About how many people?"

"Twenty people would be one fighting unit and 200 people would be one battalion."

Quyen and I reach the field where my mother and Ngu are gathering peanuts. Water fills the plot, prompting the peanut plants to rise from their roots.

Quyen rolls up her trousers and wanders down to collect peanuts. "It's so easy," she says.

My mother says, "You're only here for a short time. Try to calculate from the moment we first sow peanut seeds into the furrows until we harvest, then you might understand how muddy and exhausted my children and I can be."

Ngu adds, "Whoever has a full bowl of rice should remember that each grain is full of bitterness."

I step into a nest of crickets. When I turn the ground with a shovel thousands of fat and heavy ones swarm into the air. My mother and Ngu quit gathering peanuts to catch crickets. My mother, grinning with pleasure, says "Oh, a blessing! Such abundance for our family! Oh!"

Ngu says happily, "Maybe our family will be the richest in the village!"

About noon, we see on Route 5 a group of people screaming and crying and running around. My mother falls headfirst down into the field, then calls to me, "Nham! Oh, Nham!" Ngu and I are afraid, thinking my mother has been blown over by the wind. My mother's face gets pale, and she puts her hands in front of her face like she's touching somebody, saying, "Nham! Oh, Nham! Why does you sister Minh have blood all over her face like that?"

Ngu shakes my mother, "Mother! Mother! Why are you talking like that?"

A few people suddenly seperate from the crowd on Route 5 and run across the fields. Someone screams loudly and full of sorrow, "Mrs. Hung (Hung is my father's name) Hurry to receive the body of your child." Ngoc with his hair standing on end, the poet I saw at the station yesterday afternoon, runs in the lead. He doesn't speak clearly. I only hear it vaguely, only hear enough to know that my little sister Minh and Aunt Luu's daughter Mi were riding through the 3-way intersection on their way home from school when a truck carrying electric posts hit and killed them.

My mother writhes in the peanut field, smearing herself with dirt. The crickets rise up off the ground, fly for a moment, then drop back down to bury their heads in the mud. Ngu stands silently, her eyes confused and full of fear, looking off in the direction of the Dong Son mountains as if she can't understand why the heavens suddenly became so cruel.

Ngoc, Quyen, and I run out to the road. Tears are streaming down my face. Minh was just 13 years old. Mi was just 13 years old. I hadn't even had a chance to make the guava picker for Mi yet. And my little sister Minh, a child so generous, her whole life she only wore patched clothes, and she always set aside for me the most delicious things to eat.

The truck carrying three electric posts lies turned over by the edge of the road. People are using a jack to raise the wheel of the truck, looking for a way to pull out the bodies of Minh and Mi. Minh lies on her side, Mi on her stomach, pressed against each other, with the crumpled bicycle next to them.

I put my hand to my mouth to keep any cries from coming out. I loved them so much. Swarms of flies cluster around their noses. I don't know where Ngoc got the handful of incense he's now holding in front of the faces of the two girls. The smoke lingers in one place, unable to rise.

I won't say anything else about the deaths of Minh and Mi. In the afternoon we have to have the funeral for my sister and my cousin. It's like every other funeral in the village, with lots of tears, lots of condolences. One of the village youths and I carry Aunt Luu on a stretcher out to the end of the fields and then later carry her back. Quyen follows. Ngoc wrote a poem about the whole thing. I don't understand how he could write a poem during such a brutal time as this.

"The Funeral of the Virgins in the Fields"
by the poet Bui Van Ngoc

I follow the funeral of the virgins into the fields
White death, completely white death
White butterflies, white flowers
White souls, white lives
Oh, I follow the funeral of the virgins into the fields
I dig a grave, 1.8 metres long, 0.7 metres wide
I dig a grave, 1.5 metres deep
Oh, I bury these spirits that were just beginning
Oh, here is an offering for the earth
Completely pure virgins, completely white death
White butterflies, white flowers
White spirits, white lives
Oh, I stow in my heart this pure white poem
I break off a green branch to cover my eyes
The breeze flutters, the spirit flutters away
The spirit flies away, over the fields of the body
I follow the funeral of the virgins into the field
On a day like that, not a special day
On a day like that, a normal day
Oh, I am lost in the crowd, in the masses, in the hearts, in the grief, in the desolation. . .

The next afternoon, I take Quyen to the station. Aunt Luu tried forever, but Quyen still insisted on leaving. We follow the dirt road that runs along the edge of the village, pass the lotus pond, then go along the edge of the ditch back toward the town seat. When we come to the lotus pond we sit down to rest. Quyen says, "I've only been here three days, but it seems like so long!"

In the afternoon the district station is empty. There are only about 10 people standing in the yard waiting for the train. In the emptiness you can hear sounds coming from a cassette somewhere. The train arrives. One by one the passengers get on the train. Some teachers from the district high school. A soldier. A few traders. A teenager wearing clear glasses, carrying a suitcase. An old couple. Quyen.

Quyen says, "Hey! What's-Your-Name! I'm leaving! Thanks for coming to the station with me!"

I stand in the station yard for a long time. The train disappears. I have a feeling I'll never see Quyen again.

I pass through the ticket gate and go back to the village. Looking from the side, you can only see a small green spot in the yellow fields, and vaguely in the distance the outline of the Dong Son mountains. I have so many remembrances there.

Will tomorrow be sunny or rainy? Actually, rain or sunshine are both meaningless to me now. I am Nham. Tomorrow I will be seventeen years old. Is that the most beautiful time in a person's life or not?

THE HITCHHIKER'S GRAVEYARD

M. Kettner, PO Box 20518, Seattle, WA 98102. Excerpted from the unpublished novel, The Face in the Window. This is Chapter One.

DECEMBER 17, 1968

White and I had gone AWOL from Presidio shortly after morning formation. We had stashed our gear at the Greyhound station the night before, and we were to meet on the corner of Haight and Ashbury at 11:00. White was collecting a five-spot from a buddy in the motor pool, which we needed to hop the intercity to Berkeley and start hitchhiking east.

It was gray and rainy. Early, I walked around the neighborhood. It, like much of the country, seemed a victim of decay and abandonment, shoved aside by the relentless prosecution of a war on the other side of the ocean. The renaissance Hashbury represented had been mutated by revolution, as if love and hate had suddenly collided. Empty storefronts and burned-out buildings were boarded up; many first-story windows had grates fitted over them; and doors that had not been bolted for years now had double locks.

I stopped for coffee in a corner cafe. The place was full of street people—junkies and speed freaks mostly—losing teeth into their coffee, shuffling between tables, so stoned-out they could hardly manage a smooth under-the-counter exchange of money and plastic bag. The owner avoided speaking to anyone, was old and balding, and slow as fourth class postage. The dishwasher banged about in the kitchen. Car and bus traffic on the other side of the steamed-up windows was constant. The jukebox came on (Jim Morrison). Another junkie entered, furtive, tight-mouthed, shaking the mist from his shoulders.

A number of the "customers" tried to hit me up for spare change. Finally, a speed freak flopped onto the stool beside mine. He was wearing a black band jacket with silver epaulets and buttons; his wrists and neck were so thin they looked like those of newly-hatched birds, frail and featherless. Leering, with a slight, yet jovial air of menace he inquired how much money I had. It was now pelting rain outside. Through the spot I had cleared in the foggy window, I noticed White approaching.... All eyes were on me, waiting for my response. As I had told the others, I told the speed freak. I had spent my last fifteen cents on coffee. I rose and turned my pockets inside out to emphasize I was broke and cleared the premises.

White could be a loudmouth and a braggart but, basically, he was all right and we stuck together as much as possible, recognizing the merits of the buddy system in our situation.

White and I had been detained for previous AWOLs (thirty-six and forty-five days respectively) at Special Processing Detachment (SPD), which is an Army holding and disciplinary facility and part of the stockade complex. My first time in one, I had had no idea what to expect. White said he'd spent a few weeks in special processing at Lewis and Ord, and Presidio was the least violent of the three—which, White maintained, was the result of its location smack in the middle of San Francisco and not in the boonies where there were no women and nothing to do but drink, fight and cut each other up. Fifty yards from the barracks we could catch a bus to downtown, where we often passed our afternoons once we had ducked formation—panhandling and wandering the streets, reading books at the public library, or drinking endless cups of coffee at some cheesy restaurant.

As in all SPDs (and Presidio being no exception), I soon learned, there were a lot of desperate people, ourselves included; consequently, White and I lingered as little as possible in the company area. From living on the run we had very few possessions and most of them were stolen in a single week at Presidio. Sometimes you had to steal, sure, but at Presidio towels, bootlaces, hats, underwear, or anything else left out disappeared. Lockers were frequently broken into, beds rifled. Cadre and permanent party weren't to be trusted either. Under the guise of security, we were harassed with shakedowns at all hours. We had to stand by opened lockers and empty our pockets while MPs went through our duds, made sure the toothpaste was toothpaste, and grilled us about this and about that. Predictably, though, the screws rarely busted anyone.

Food at the mess hall was shit: powdered eggs and rotted peaches for breakfast, rubbery beef and inedible string beans for supper. Due to SPD's transient character there was never enough to eat as the cooks didn't know how many to plan for, and what you did receive might be stolen off your plate when you weren't expecting it, or by someone who would as soon fight as look at you. A soldier couldn't draw pay until he had been in SPD at least thirty days or was attached to a permanent post. The poorer you were, the more dependent you were on the military, and the harder it would be to run away. Conditions were partially intentional, to induce a soldier to return to duty where daily life was not so chaotic; but, more importantly, they existed because the civil rights movement and widespread opposition to the draft and service in Vietnam were causing the Army to lose control of its personnel (especially in disciplinary units, which were crowded, short-staffed and burdened with the resultant paperwork).

White and I were bunked in A Company, the worst, since it billeted mainly new arrivals and releasees from the stockade. Most of those who were picked up or had turned themselves in were processed, assigned a bunk, charged, tried and processed out in three to thirty days. Half went AWOL again, like White and me, before receiving hearings.

As was often the case on large Army bases, there were no fences around Presidio. The primary constraints preventing a soldier from going AWOL were a sense of duty and fear of authority. However, White and I had, in the course of resisting service, all but lost our respect for authority and our sense of duty. And we were well aware these were modern times and that they no longer flogged or executed men for desertion.

We were forced to scrounge new civvies in church basements and free stores. I got stuck with a pair of baggy black pants I held up with clothesline and boots which didn't match—the right one, black, and the left, brown. Including socks and underwear, we avoided wearing Army issue or carrying military ID. White had duplicates of his brother's identification. I had my civilian driver's license and my draft card, which I had avoided handing in (as required) upon induction. One of the few possessions besides my suede coat I managed to hang onto was a down sleeping bag. White had lost his sleeping bag at a laundromat in Mill City prior to busting himself (he was so hungry), and not until the day before we were to split did he finally steal a threadbare bag from the back seat of a parked convertible in North Beach.

White and I had planned for the last four days to take off. We learned we were only receiving a field grade Article 15 which translated into confinement to quarters, a loss of pay and immediate resumption of duty. Both of us were under orders for Nam and we could expect to be on our way posthaste. A lot of good it had done to turn ourselves in! We had hoped for a court-martial which might have delayed our orders, been a black mark on our military records or possibly lead to a discharge. I agreed when White declared this time he would remain AWOL for at least two months and see what the motherfuckers did then. It could mean jail and accepting a bad discharge, but he'd been in the slammer before and could hack it.

In California, hitchhiking is allowed on entrance ramps only. That first afternoon we barely logged twenty miles and had to sleep on the ledge under a viaduct to avoid the rain, while the highway rumbled and crashed a few feet above our heads. Following one short ride, the entire next morning passed until we caught another. The exit where we'd been dropped must have been one of the worst in the state. The guardrails, light poles and signs were covered in graffiti: initials, dates, drawings, poems and comments were carved, scratched, written and spray-painted on them:

Jeremy, 6 hrs
7 hrs
8 hrs
9 hrs
10 hrs
12 hrs, and still no ride

Jim and Phil, waited 24 hours
we're hoofing it to the next exit

Chris and Toni, we're girls, even we can't get a ride!

WELCOME
TO THE HITCHHIKERS GRAVEYARD

We reclined by the roadside against our gear, dead in the water, tossing pebbles at crows, reading the same signs over and over, and dozing in the cold morning sun. Every half-hour or so a car happened along; we'd stand up, straighten our clothing and stick out our thumbs.

Midnight found us east of Sacramento at yet another slow entrance. It was freezing. Our chests felt constricted and we were shivering uncontrollably. It was so dark we couldn't locate suitable shelter and simply crawled through a fence and wrapped up in our bags and ground sheets in the corner of a field. We nibbled the last of a package of cheese crackers we'd bought at a gas station, had a drink from the canteen and tried to sleep—but the cold kept waking us up. The low clouds finally let loose their rain; somehow it seemed warmer and I slept. Two hours later I opened my eyes to discover an inch of snow on the ground. White was tossing and turning to keep warm and emitting little groaning sounds. I inquired if he was all right. He assured me he'd be okay till morning. I went to sleep again but, chilled through, woke up for the final time at dawn to six inches of snow. I had to piss so bad I was gritting my teeth. Our feet and bodies were numb from the cold and at first we couldn't walk properly. We would need to turn back; it was too late in the year to make it, and we had been foolish to try.

White, a born drifter, didn't much care where he ended up. Instead of visiting his aunt in Indiana, he decided to head for Fresno where his former stepfather lived, and with whom he could probably stay a few weeks. I contacted my parents in Michigan, claiming I had Christmas leave. A buddy and I had started out hitchhiking, but the weather wasn't with us. I'd shelled out most of my money on a motel when we were trapped in a freak snow storm, and I only had sufficient cash for bus fare to Salt Lake City.

Three hours later I picked up my dough at Western Union. (As expected, more than I had asked for.) We went to McDonald's for burgers. The snow was melting already and, with luck, White figured he could reach Fresno by midnight. I gave him five dollars and we parted.

M. Kettner is a poet and fiction writer currently living in Seattle, WA. His work has appeared in hundreds of periodicals, both nationally and internationally. An Army enlistee during the Viet Nam era, he chose jail and, eventually, exile in Canada rather than serve in Viet Nam. ***The Face in the Window*** *is a novel loosely based on his experiences leading up to the act of desertion.*

Wishing the Lightning

April King, PO Box 504, Glendale, OR 97442.

The end of my third quarter class of the U.S. history sequence was painful. I spent the last week-end of term preparing for the final, trying to second guess what our instructor, James, would ask. He gave us broad hints: an essay on the Cold War or Vietnam, ten I.D.'s — all biggies, don't worry about it.

But I always worry, about everything. Since I was a child I've worried. And college, returning so late to college, has been one of the deepest worries I've ever experienced. Besides, most of the years included in this last term were within my lifetime, that same worry-filled lifetime. But it seemed different somehow, in retrospect, than the history book portrayed it.

When James handed out the test questions on the day of the final, I realized I'd guessed wrong on almost all of the I.D.'s. I'd prepared for the question on Betty Friedan; hell, I prepared for that one by being born female in America during the early 1950's. But where was the Termination Policy which seemed to exemplify what Americans had wanted in the 50's — conformity, assimilation into a vast featureless mass of bland Americana? Why wasn't there a question on the McCarthy-Army hearings, the New Left, the Chicago Democratic Convention or the return of conservatism with the Reagan years?

The truth was, I'd prepared for my view of history, which was far more biased than the book's. But Rosa Parks was one of the I.D.'s, so was Watergate; I knew I'd get at least partial credit on all of them.

The essay question was different. One half the final grade, and I'd misjudged. The Cold War had been my guess. Vietnam was an outcome of that fearful mentality after all. But as I stared down at the question, I knew I hadn't prepared for it because it hurt. It was the one place, the one period of time in which my empathy had failed me completely, not just a lack of sympathy on occasion but a complete lack of the ability to empathize with those directly involved with something that had, indirectly, changed my life. A total inability to bridge the gap.

At the beginning of my last year of high school — the year I flunked most of my classes before dropping out at the age of sixteen in defiance of dress codes, societal rules, my parent's aspirations for me and as a result of too many drugs and too little studying — a young man named Walter, whom I hardly knew, wrote to me from boot camp professing his love. I asked my father what I should do.

"I don't even know him," I'd said.

My father laughed and told me to write. "I bet I wrote twenty letters just like that when I joined the Navy during the war." He'd said the war as if it were an ongoing thing which men simply went off to join at some point in their lives. "Write." He'd added, "just be sweet and don't worry. He's lonely and scared. He doesn't really mean any of it."

And I had written, but I hadn't known how I should feel about it. I disagreed with the war in Vietnam, war in general, and had protested against it violently on occasion. Besides, my father had never asked me to be sweet before. What was I supposed to think? My brother and I had always been spoken to on equal terms by our parents.

Be sweet.

Would my father have said such a thing to my brother? Was my brother being sweet, during the following years, by majoring in a subject at college he discovered he didn't even like just so he could avoid the draft?

Then, in early January of '68, if I remember correctly, Walter sent a letter from Vietnam. He'd just arrived and was full of amazement at the unfamiliar sights and smells. Somewhere, in between the words, in the spaces left by things he hadn't dared write to me, I'd read his fear. But I pretended not to have seen it.

I didn't think of Walter as I studied for the final, didn't think of the fear in his letter or my inability to face the knowledge of the distance between us. I hadn't known what to say to him then, even in a letter, and I'd put off answering. Some days, I'd taken Walter's letter out of my bureau drawer and reread it, smelled the paper with my eyes closed, trying desperately to imagine what Vietnam was like, trying to think of some words to write to him. But I never wrote.

No more letters with smudged envelopes, addressed in Walter's squarish handwriting, arrived after that one.

A few months later someone told me Walter had died. I don't remember who told me, but I do remember I was standing next to the rack of Table Talk pies in the grocery store. The same grocery store where my mother and her best friend had cried, out in the parking lot while I sat in the back seat of the car on Nov. 22, 1963, after turning on the radio and hearing of Kennedy's assassination.

Walter had died during the Tet Offensive, or maybe I've just added that detail over the years. The last time I was back East I could have gone to the Wall in D.C. and checked. I was about thirty miles away, in Southern Maryland, but I couldn't do it. If I'd found his name, I would have had to give up that tiny hope hidden deep inside which always mistrusted the report of Walter's death. It was the same hope that had kept me from calling his parents when I was a teenager. I'd used the excuse of their age not to call then; they'd had Walter late in their lives he'd told me, and I told myself it would be unkind to disturb them. When I was back East, it was conveniently inconvenient to go to D.C. and search the black marble for his name. I'd saved myself from the possible pain of knowledge on both occasions, but in doing so I'd denied myself the truth.

Nor did I remember, as I studied for the final, the silent anti-war vigil on the village green of the town where I grew up, or the man who helped me to my feet that day, helped me up and wiped the blood from my forehead, after one of my old friends threw a rock from a passing car. The man who helped me was the son of the town's doctor, the organizer of the protest, a Quaker, and I

remember him telling me, as he lifted me from the ground that day, to think of my friend who'd died.

"Remember and don't say a word," he'd said before I could shout the obscenities I was thinking.

He was arrested later for refusing induction and sentenced to ten years. He never appealed the sentence, never expressed any regret. That's what I heard anyway, I'd moved to Philadelphia by then and never asked around, when I came home for a visit, to find out if it was true. I didn't want to take current events personally anymore, didn't want to think about all the people who'd been hurt, were still being hurt for all the wrong reasons, so I never asked.

But as I wrote out my essay answer for the final, I found myself thinking about 1968, both young men and those unasked questions left in my life. I had to force myself to concentrate on what I was doing. Keep to the subject, I told myself, but it wasn't easy. More than once I needed to take deep breaths, look around the room and clench my fists to make the images of both men go away, to remind myself that I'd read the material for the class, remembered the T.V. news coverage, the articles in *Time* and *Life*. Bringing the war home.

Don't make it personal, I thought, don't bring it home now.

When I was finished, I had time to reread my answer, adding some information I'd forgotten to the essay: the original logic behind U.S. aid to the French in Vietnam after WWII, beside the first paragraph; the words Operation Rolling Thunder, above my comments on Johnson's policy after the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. I left no unanswered questions in my Blue Book, but I knew my words were inadequate. I walked out of the classroom feeling drained.

On the ride home I told my husband I'd guessed wrong about the questions.

"History shouldn't include a person's life," I said, feeling old for the first time. Somehow, somewhere, I'd missed something, left the most important parts out of the essay, left all the most fundamental questions unanswered. I'd gone back to school in order to get the basics I needed to write. Fiction. Memoirs. Poetry. "What's the point in writing if you can't empathize, if you can't make the reader feel for your characters?" I asked my husband.

He smiled, shaking his head, saying, "Wanna bet you got an A?" I watched him as he drove for a few miles, wanting to ask, how can I ever learn to do this if I still can't ask the questions? I wanted to ask, but I didn't.

That night, I woke up crying. I got out of bed and went to sit in the darkness of my living room. I hadn't thought of the man I'd met in a dorm room at Harvard in over twenty years. He'd come home with a Purple Heart, half a right hand and his face permanently twisted into a lopsided grimace from his scars. But there he'd been in my dream, rubbing lotion on the scar tissue of his gnarled hand to keep the skin from drying out and cracking in the New England cold. So plain and real I felt as though I could have reached out and touched his twisted smile as he held up what was left of his fingers in an abbreviated peace sign.

"A little piece is all I want," he'd teased me drunkenly, and my boyfriend hit him. And I, as if with anger still pent up from Walter's death, that silent vigil and all the unasked questions, hit my boyfriend in the head with a wine bottle.

I never saw either of those men again after that night.

"What can I do?" I whispered through my tears as I sat in the darkness. "I don't know where any of you are."

Even in my own home I'd been unable to reach across the gulf, the one gap in my eighteen year marriage, which Vietnam had caused, never been able to picture, no matter how clearly it was described, what the war had been like. What it was to fight, to feel such fear, without understanding the point. I hadn't even been able to wake my husband during the first few years of our marriage when he'd cry out in his sleep. Deep choked cries he was never able to release from his dreams into the screams which needed to break free.

I went back upstairs to bed, but lay awake for hours, trying to piece it all together. Just before falling asleep, I pictured the man in the Harvard dorm room again. I knew I'd been there, knew I'd met him, but suddenly I wasn't sure if I'd confused the memory over the years. Maybe he was the SDS member who'd blown his fingers and part of his face away with a homemade bomb, and the memory of the Vietnam vet, equally real, was someone whose face I could no longer recall. Maybe my memories of recent history were all twisted and confused, like the hands of those two men, and I'd never be able to bridge the distance the war had caused.

The final was on a Tuesday; by Thursday's class James had finished the grading. My husband's classes were over for the term, so he'd come with me to pick up my test. He looked over my shoulder as I was handed my Blue Book and nudged me, saying, "told you not to worry."

I was surprised to see the A on the cover along with a note which read — Hidden Haiku Inside. I'd included poetry in each of my papers during the three terms of U.S. history and assumed, as I opened the answer book, that James had written some biting comment or humorous aside in poetic form.

On the third page of my essay answer was an arrow pointing toward my added words Operation Rolling Thunder along with a note, underlined twice, which read, *the name still sends shivers ...*

For less than a second my shoulders and jaw tensed and I saw, in that brief moment, the look on my husband's face when we had lived near Ft. Huachuca in Arizona and the soldiers would play war games out across the desert. I looked up at James. He was handing out the rest of the class' Blue Books, talking about what had lost people points on their answers. I turned to the end of my essay. *Rolling Thunder Haiku* was written in blue ink across the line below my last sentence.

I read the eight words of the poem beneath the title. Some hidden synapse within my mind triggered. I felt the nerves of my right arm twitch as the image of a swift hand flashed, catching a cricket. My stomach churned at the borrowed memory of molars on crunchy insect, and in a

sudden bright flash the silhouette which my mind's eye had been staring at, black against a blue-black sky, became the face, younger and showing more tension than I'd ever seen in it, of the man I married. I saw him through the eyes of the 'Mountain Yarn' sharing guard duty with him. It was a story he'd told me often.

"How could he catch those crickets in the dark?" he'd say, then add that he felt safer with the mountain people than the 'Arvens'. "But it was just degrees, it was never safe."

"Did you write this?" I spoke without thinking, interrupting what James had been telling the class.

"Yeah."

"Just now, I mean while you graded this?"

He smiled and nodded then continued his comments to the class.

"It's good," I said, looking back down, reading the poem again. The bridge of the poem held my weight. Not all the way, not into my husband's mind at that moment in the tower, but close, next to him, looking on. I handed the Blue Book to him so he could read the poetry note.

I read that poem again when we got home from school then put it away, but the feeling the poem had caused followed me around, waking me at night. After a few days I asked my husband what he'd thought when he read the words.

"It reminded me of the flight in," he said, "after fifteen hours in that plane ... I remember thinking, good, great, they've got thunderstorms here too. Then I realized it wasn't lightning. And I thought, shit, what did I do!"

And I saw, for an instant, the sporadic flashes along the horizon line, heard the steady roar of the plane's props and the distant, destructive thunder, smelled the heat of the jungle night, the fear-sweat of men, tasted the sour bile rise up in my throat.

I read the poem again, aloud this time.

So few words, such a fragile span to cross over the terrible distance.

I suppose this is my attempt at a long winded and overdue thank-you note. History should always be taught this way; bringing it home so the questions are asked, the bridges traversed. And I don't think anyone who wasn't there could ever feel enough empathy to tell the stories, to construct those bridges which are strong enough to hold our weight.

Wishing the lightning
was lightning,
the thunder
thunder.

(with profound gratitude to
James Dunn for writing this
poem, for building this bridge.)

Back In The World

Tom Page, PO Box 4446, Wichita, KS 67204-0446.

My aunt wasn't home. I had paid off the taxi that brought me from the Mid-Continent Airport. It was one o'clock, and she was probably downtown on her job at the Western Union office. Her front door key wasn't under the door mat and there wasn't one in the mail box either. I walked the five blocks to a pay phone at the IGA on the corner of Seneca and McCormick and called another cab. This time I went straight to the apartment across from the university in the northeast section of the city. I was tired of carrying my two bags, and would have gone there in the first place if I'd had any guts. The door to the apartment was unlocked, typical of her. I went in and set my bags next to the door. The place looked the same, and I might have felt as if I were returning from an overnight trip—but that was not the way I felt. I'd been gone for two years. When I went to Fort Benning to enter the army, Linda and I had agreed she would stay in Kansas and continue to work on her degree. My first year in the military, spent in the states, I'd come home on leave, and she'd join me during university vacations. I didn't want her to play the army camp-follower. Raised as an army brat, I saw enough of that lifestyle while I was growing up. Convinced that I'd get out after my mandatory two years of service, I'd assured her that the arrangement was temporary.

In the kitchen I made some bacon and eggs and was eating when I heard her open the door.

"Jack, you're back," she said in a hushed voice.

"Yeah."

"When did you get here?"

"Just now."

"You stopped writing. Did you get my letters?"

"I got them."

"Why didn't you write?"

"There wasn't anything to say, or maybe I didn't want to write about what was happening there. I just wanted to see you."

"I know... I know. Now that you're back, I don't care."

"Did you get the money I sent?"

"Yes. I put your government checks in the bank. I've saved over five thousand dollars."

"Fine. We may need it. I'm starved—let's go out to eat. Do you still have the car?"

"Sure, I've got the car. Don't you want to change?"

"No."

We went to the steak house on East Central, one of my favorite places. The owner was an old friend, and it was good to see him again. During our meal, she listened to my apology for not writing, and I told her about the flight home. I didn't mention any plans for the future, and when we were back in the apartment, I told her that I was thoroughly beat, that I needed to sleep. We made love, as tired as I was, and as we did I thought of how strange it felt to be home again.

When she left in the morning for one of her classes at the university (she was a teaching assistant), I was still sleeping. She returned a little before noon, and I was in bed, but I heard her come in and got up and kissed her. I asked her what she had planned for the rest of the day.

"Nothing that can't wait. I'm getting my dissertation ready for a typist. What do you want to do?"

"Oh, nothing, really. Let's drink coffee and talk, like we used to do. Remember?"

"Yes. I want you to tell me about Vietnam and the army. O.K.?"

"O.K. That's why I didn't write, and before I came here yesterday, I stopped at Emma's because I didn't want to talk about it and I knew she wouldn't ask."

"You don't have to tell me about it if you don't want to."

"No. I'll tell you about it. It would be stupid not to." I told her how five men out of my platoon were killed on patrol, and how eight others were wounded bad enough to be shipped out. The guys should not have died. They died because of inexperience and snafus and because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. I told her that, in a sense, they died for me and for their buddies, because there was nothing else they respected, or that I respected. I unloaded all that I had seen and felt there on her: I said we had no business there. What I didn't expect to her to understand was the one thing I had learned: when you're in the army, you just do it. There's no other choice. This is something I wouldn't have known if I hadn't gone there myself, and I didn't see how I could expect other people to understand.

"There's guys in Saigon and other places in Nam who will give you a different story, but that's how it was for me. It was filthy and dehumanizing. One day when my time was up, I just left and nobody saw me off. No one met me when I walked off the plane in San Francisco, for that matter. In some ways, I have a hard time believing I was there. But I was. Anyway, there's something I need to tell you." She looked at me as if I were about to ask her for a divorce.

"What is it?"

"I'm not out of the army. I stopped writing to you when I decided to stay in. This is something I wanted to tell you face-to-face. I've accepted a regular commission and I've been reassigned. At the moment, I'm taking thirty days leave. I'm here to ask you to go with me. What do you say?"

Linda brushed her hair back from her forehead with her right hand and glanced out the window. This was what I had been waiting for, to see how she would take this bit of news. It was apparent that she didn't know what to say.

"You can't say I didn't ask." I said. "This isn't something I've had to think about for long. At some point in Nam—I don't know when—I knew that there was no turning back for me. I don't think I can ever take straight life seriously after what I've seen. Half the men who survived in my platoon are staying in, too. I'm a lifer. If you don't want to go with me, I'll understand. I'll be disappointed, but I'll understand. I don't have the energy for civilian games just now.

"I don't know," she said and started to cry. "Why would you want to do this?"

"I've got almost four weeks of leave left. We can do anything you like."

"We'll stay here. We'll think it through and talk it over."

By the end of my first week back, we'd visited our relatives, hers and mine, and seen some friends. She asked me if I wanted to have a party, and I told her that I didn't think so. I was happy to be there with her. She asked me why I never went out, and I said I was tired and I was comfortable in the apartment. She didn't comment on this, but asked me why I wore my army uniform when my civilian clothes were hanging in the closet. I said that clean uniforms were a change for me; it had been a while since I'd worn anything but dirty fatigues.

One afternoon I was reading when she came home from the library.

"The department's having a party tonight," she said. "Do you want to go with me?"

"I don't think so. You go on... Enjoy yourself."

"What's wrong, Jack? I think it's time we talked it out—I'll skip the party."

"Sure, whatever you like."

At first, I let her do the talking. After all, I'd handed her a lot to think about. She wanted to know if my attitude about the army had changed since I got home. I told her no, it had not. But my attitude about the army wasn't all that was involved. I said that I understood why my father had stayed in the service after W.W. II. This was not something I expected civilians to comprehend. The pros and cons of the Vietnam war were not an important factor in my decision. What mattered to me was that, after my tour in Nam, I did not want to associate with civilians. The war would pass; it would be over, I said. The army and my career in it would go on to other, not necessarily better, things. My ticket was punched, and the army would need guys like me in order to rebuild. If I worked hard, took it seriously and kept my nose clean, I'd wind up a Colonel, at least.

"What's your next assignment?" she asked.

"The advanced course at the Army Intelligence School at Fort Holabird in Baltimore, and I'd like you to go with me."

"Jack, I can't go there with you and wherever they send you over the next twenty years. It would kill me. I want a teaching career and I thought you wanted one too."

"I don't think I know what I wanted."

"This is what you want?"

"I haven't any choice."

Tears formed in her eyes. Nothing more was said. She didn't go to the party and we went to bed early.

The next day, after Linda had left for the campus, I called my aunt to tell her I was leaving for Baltimore. Linda would be staying here for a while, I said, and I asked if she'd stay in contact with her. After I had spit-shined my jump boots and sharpened my boot knife, I cleaned my Smith & Wesson .38 Air Weight and snapped it into the top of my left boot. I wore my pants legs over my boot tops. My two bags packed, I took a cab to the bus station,

and waited on the first bus to Kansas City. I could get one straight through to Washington from there. Baltimore wasn't far from D.C., and I'd have some time to settle in. I could do some reading in the Holabird library and visit army friends in Washington. I planned to buck for a South American assignment after the advanced course.

I'd write Linda a "Dear Mary" from Holabird. What else could I tell her? She was a good woman, and she'd get over me soon enough. She'd meet an academic who didn't know the things I knew and who could settle down at a cow college someplace. The chances were good I'd eventually meet an army woman I could get along with, one who had been to Nam. I was sure of it.

Poetry by David Reeve

Signs

The 5$ bill on the gift shop floor
in Anchorage was a lucky sign,
and signs were all
any of us looked for—December 27, 1966,
not knowing if, or when.... A moving postcard
slipped into the slot, addressing the pregnant
wife in Indiana, along with 2$ insurance papers
from the airport vending machine.
Sixteen hours over a wide dark Pacific,
Northwest Orient finally ascended from Nirita's
runway, just at ocean's edge,
Kimpo Airbase in Seoul a short skip away.
Fifteen minutes in flight, the huge metal bird
shook and shuddered, faces rigid with eyes scanning
the belly of the beast for answers. "We are experiencing
minor engine problems,"
came the Oriental accent over the intercom, while
the eagle
steeply pitched and banked, right wing shooting sparks.
Silence,
the blank eyes, the fear,
metal creaking & groaning, violently shivering....
On Nirita's runway 12 ambulances wailed sirens, while
9 firetrucks gave frantic chase outside the wing window.

The pilot had lied—
just one sign of
13 more months to come.

David Reeve, PO Box 351, Lafayette, IN 47902.

Poetry by Stephanie Dickinson

No Longer, Not Me

Doug Hills Supreme Patriot
U.S. Marine, killed at Huế
lies in a basket of pink satin
no legs, no eyes, no mouth.
That was me. No longer.
Now I'm the hands that arrange
the hands of this body.
I'm the smell of the hatchery
next to the manse,
the grit of oyster shells,
the chicks' cobwebby wet,
the half moon shells of birthing.
I'm the hurt of buttermilk,
and the loafing oats.
I am the want wanting
to kiss each of my visitors,
the desire to lick their eyes
dry of salt tears.
I'm the breeze raising
the curtain's white lace,
the refrain of a hymn sung yesterday.
I'm Wednesday's gold
flecked chaff rising up
the Kent Feeds Elevator shaft.
I'm giggling that spills, I'm the girls
scribbling the sign-in register
fresh from detention.
I'm the surly smell of April
on their jean knees,
I'm the gold-buttons
that catch their attention,
I'm their words, "He's got
the face of an angel!"
I'm the wish their lips
place on my face, "Please wake."

Song

Ask after me
and rain will answer—
ruts and tire treads
slow ground rain
that floats
footprints away.
I take the hen
she is used to me
I stroke her
kiss her head then
break her neck.
In the sky I hear
snakes flame
cobras fight thunder
fire rain
like tin lids hit roof.
Soon I be nothing
flesh loose
wind can blow my meat
off my bones
alone I eat
my delicate yellow hen
take all day to
digest her skin and feathers.
I redden my lips
spit on my fingers
I wet myself
ready for men in street,
jeeps, trucks.
I'm magic I'm magic
when GI inside me.

Fat Man

Fat men like me so it was no surprise when a Vietnam war veteran with titties offered me a lift. "You're not jailbait, are you?" It was my lucky day. Big T was out of Pettibone, North Dakota on his way to the VA to commit himself. I expected some fun and lit a Tarryton cigarette, a long-gone brand I mourn for now that I've thought of it. When he said he liked to steer the '67 Ford Falcon with his eyes closed, I knew I was in a fast moment. Fast as the back of my old boyfriend Shiva's motorcycle before he wrecked it and broke his neck on a pothole. I remember him flying over the highway, his yard of hair flaring like blond flame from the stack of a catalyst cracker. I was choosing the dark again Shiva told me at our end. Well yeah, I said. Ten miles back I ate my last meth tab. Stolen from a hatchery where the white cross were diluted with water and given to chickens to make them lay eggs faster. I had the jitters and seeing was excruciatingly vivid. Bit T's arm crept along the back of the seat. Clods of deodorant hung from the hairs in his armpit like large curds of cottage cheese. "I could use some fiddling," he said, "you can trust me to be good for 10 bucks. 15 if you kiss it." An 18-wheeler passed us hauling cattle to destruction. The cows tangled together like one drowning man, a nose with four hundred holes. The clouds picked up speed becoming elephants and rabbits clapping their hands. Clouds stuck in the bovine eyes. Within 24 hours every one of them would be shut. "Come on then," Big T said. Fat men smell sweet and suffer like Jesus. His wrists were crisscrossed with scar tissue, the cuts done artistically. His baby prick had a desolate taste like places where the interstate was unfinished. I heard him counting mile markers under his breath. Streamers of dung leaked like spinach from the truck. A strand hit the windshield at an intimate moment. "Balls!" Big T said. The working wiper was on the passenger's side and squeaked manure over the glass like the wormy ass of a cat. When I came up I felt my hair beginning to loosen at the roots. I was thrilled and smelled the sky that had never been bluer.

It's Vietnam, Daddylonglegs

I grew up with the war, gray shingled
in the back acre's barn.
Scream of a frog, it was the old song
of used air in innertubes sung,
my brothers growing up in shadow,
yardstick of their inches.
What good to speak of the fathers?
who kept the silence of grandmothers,
Bibles, flypapers, the silence of
bluebottles breeding thick as minnows.
What good to speak of the light
at the tunnel's end? that flamed
when my brother not waiting to be taken,
embraced it.
Where is Vietnam? called the water
trough tongued with cheesy cud.
Write us, cried the dragonflies,
the blackflies, the gnats.
What what what! the husks rustled.
Floating in the ditch a civet cat's liver,
maggots glistening like liquid
apple slices spat, *Fight.*
What good to speak of the mothers?
who blind to fireflies sparking tree
and star between farms
muttered in vegetable plots,
planting their knees in seed,
praying, shivering by wringer washers,
becoming their sons.
Unrecognizable. Kisses cold
as roots, breath bitter as marigolds.
Like woodticks like midnight crows
they hovered low for grubs.
Who said no?

Stephanie Dickinson, 447 W. 45th St., #4D, New York, NY 10036.

SHORT SHORT by JIM JANKO

My Son

I crouched in the shade like an animal learning to conceal its body. Splinters of light shone through the trees, speckling the grass a golden brown and yellow. From far off, Robert, from the sky itself, there came a strange sound, a nervous and quiet humming. The sound snuck up on me little by little, gradually descending and growing louder. Finally I saw the outline of a biplane in the south sky, a dark shape flying toward our town, following the course of the Illinois River. Although the trees hid my view of the river, I knew it made a long S-curve near the edge of town, the same shape traced by the plane one thousand feet higher. I watched the dark speck drift upward in a clear sky, and then it spun toward me in a sudden fall, swooping and gliding. Without thinking I crept out from the old trees to stand in the light as the plane kept drawing closer. I saw the edges of its wings catch sunlight, and then I looked at the ground as the shadow of a cross swept through the grass and nearly touched my fingers. When the plane was gone I pictured its shape, the flying cross skimming over houses, yards, fields, and when I reached with my hands to make the shadow stop it just passed through and kept going. I knew then that the dead would be too many to count, that the sun threw blood as well as fire, that war would not end until the desert filled with crosses. If you do not go down under a cross, Robert, come home and stay with me until you understand why I must leave your Father. For now I will keep his house clean, count the dead, serve the drinks while invisibly whirling my arms at each cross that passes. Maybe I too am a cross, arms opening and closing as I signal the planes, trying to trick them into landing. I will wait for you, Robert, and your Father will think nothing has changed, nothing has happened. I am best at concealing myself in the darkest shade.

I stood still watching the ground and watching the sky until Milly came up behind me. She touched my shoulders and then my hair before she ran back to the house, calling your Uncle and your father. It seemed a long time went by before the two men led me back in through the door of my kitchen. I bowed my head and whispered, "Help us, help us," not quite loud enough for someone to hear. Your Father said, "Jee-zus, Beth. You might tell us what's going on here." Milly said something to comfort me, and so did Ray. I almost smiled for them, but I was still seeing the old shadow flying across the earth.

Jim Janko, 745 Baker St., San Francisco, CA 94115.

THE CRITIC AND THE *ZEITGEIST*: ALFRED KAZIN'S SIXTIES

Michael J. Birkner, Department of History, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA 17325-1486. This paper was presented at the Sixties Generations Conference, Danbury, CT, 4 November 1994.

Alfred Kazin's Sixties were eventful and tumultuous, and in that sense echoed the current history he watched unfold. A prolific writer whose renown stemmed primarily from his precocious 1943 literary history, *On Native Grounds*, and a poignant 1951 memoir, *A Walker in the City*, Kazin continued to publish widely on politics, history, and world literature throughout the Sixties, completed another artful memoir (*Starting Out in the Thirties*), and maintained a high profile among New York's contentious public intellectuals.

Through it all—the emergence of a viable Civil Rights movement, the escalation of American involvement in Vietnam, the sexual revolution and student revolt—Kazin kept a private journal and therein recorded his most intimate responses to what was going on in his head, his life, and the world.

Anyone who begins reading the journal thinking Alfred Kazin is going to provide the key to understanding the Sixties will be disappointed. No one holds the key to that decade, and Kazin's own diaries are surprisingly spotty in their engagement with such noteworthy matters as John F. Kennedy's presidential leadership, the impact of the Civil Rights movement, and the emergence of counterculture, to name just three significant subjects. Kazin was not oblivious to Kennedy, civil rights, or the counterculture, but readers seeking sustained commentary or rich insights into these matters will not find them here.

The journals Kazin kept on a nearly daily basis were intense, prolix, exasperating, and illuminating. They amply illustrate Irving Howe's tart observation about Kazin's "plenitude of words." Yet the journal entries are not simply random commentary or reflections that build tangents on tangents. The journal entries from 1961 through 1969 (for some reason Kazin did not keep a journal in 1960) offer a fresh take on the daily life of a notable American literary critic, his hopes and fears, his foibles and his obsessions. They document the agonies entailed in writing ambitiously. Perhaps most relevant for the members of this audience, they also offer some hints about how individuals—even among the most engaged with contemporary issues—devote most of their time and energy to concerns that have little to do with the themes we most frequently associate with the Sixties. Throughout the Sixties, as Kazin offered candid observations on his distinctly unstable and often terrifyingly painful universe, a reader is struck by the degree to which, amid personal agonies and the backdrop of war and assassinations, life goes on.

Kazin taught literature at Stony Brook for most of the Sixties, and despite much unflattering commentary about his peers in the English department, he mostly

enjoyed his labors there. He partook of current movies, books, plays and concerts. He traveled extensively, mostly to give lectures at colleges and universities across the nation, but also to write essays and reflections for journals like *Horizon* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. He continued to earn part of his living as a freelance writer and editor, turning out think-pieces on contemporary issues, critical essays, and introductions to paperback editions of European and American classics. Cocktail parties and dinners with New York's intellectual and cultural elite were a staple of Kazin's life. And there was constant introspection about his reading, the projects he was pursuing, his family life, as well as meditations on mortality, Jewishness and the Holocaust.

For Kazin, as for many of his peers, the Vietnam war and the Civil Rights revolution were defining issues of the Sixties, and he offered frequent and occasionally penetrating comments about these matters. Kazin opposed the war in Vietnam from the moment Lyndon Johnson first announced Operation Rolling Thunder, attended many rallies against the war, damned the war in print, and bemoaned the election of Richard M. Nixon to the presidency. He was keenly attuned to, if ambivalent about, the student revolt, not least because his son Michael became a spokesman for Students for a Democratic Society at Harvard in the late Sixties. Yet, if one were to quantify Kazin's themes through the Sixties, one would find that his journal was, first and foremost, focused on the inner life and the quest for self-knowledge. Presidents and public policies come in for their share of observations, some of them acute, as do literary dons and famous novelists. But in both volume and intensity entries focused on such topics pale beside Alfred Kazin's main subject matter: himself.

No one who reads this journal can fail to be impressed by the psychic energy Kazin devoted to questions like these: How does one signify and at the same time live a normal, balanced life? How be passionate and intensely committed to truth and yet be sensitive to others? How achieve new levels of personal consciousness without becoming overly self-absorbed? How balance the imperatives of heredity and early upbringing and experience against rationality and logic and will? At bottom, it is evident that Kazin, much like Thomas Wolfe's Eugene Gant in *Of Time and the River*, is caught up in a desperate, sweaty, impossible, and ultimately admirable desire to touch as much life as he can, to capture meanings, essences, and truth as best a human being can.

Standing back from the diary one is struck by the differences between Kazin as a middle-aged man, bemoaning his personal problems, and the public intellectual reflecting on the world. The private Kazin is not merely self-absorbed; he is narcissistic and manic-depressive. He alternates between his "miasma" and much more manic phases, between bouts of brutal oral combat with his wife Ann Birstein, and, on the flip side, pride in her good looks and their sexual chemistry. Judging from the journal, Kazin and Ann Birstein were put on earth to torment each other; certainly their fights were frequent and explosive, and each knew how to play most effectively on the other's vulnerabilities. When tempers flared and sensitivities frayed, Ann called him a momma's boy who wouldn't grow up. For his part, Kazin knew how to cut Ann by implying or saying outright that her mind and work were second-rate. Reconciliation in the bedroom and recourse to psychiatrists provided temporary relief to this peripatetic and emotionally draining relationship, but both were essentially band-aids.

I have said that Kazin was self-absorbed to the point of narcissism in his personal affairs, something that is evidenced in his relations with his young daughter Katy, who seems primarily to exist to serve his playful moods; in his negative judgment on peers—especially in the academy—who failed to pay him proper obeisance; in his fixation on the physical appearance of friends and acquaintances and his penchant for dismissing people whom he disliked by ridiculing their physical features; in his tendency to traipse off to a writer's colony, Yaddo, when the going got rough with his wife; and, in his conscious refusal to bring to closure memories of relationship from the distant past that he could no longer affect.

Were this all there were to the journal, it could be seen as a place for Kazin to vent his spleen, express his fantasies, admit his foibles and highlight the pecadelloes of others, and experiment with language and themes for the autobiographical narrative that ultimately was published in the late Seventies as *New York Jew*. But there *is* also a public side to the journal, and it is here that Kazin is often more impressive and provocative. Sometimes his pronouncements are strong and prescient, as when he rejects Lyndon Johnson's explanations for America's growing presence in Vietnam in 1965 and 1966, observing sarcastically, "innocent us, just trying to protect democracy." Sometimes he is caught between his head and his heart, as when he takes note of the radical and occasionally violent behavior of students at Harvard, admires their moxie and willingness to put their bodies on the line, but wonders in the end whether their "in your face" posture is the way to effect real change. Sometimes he is just plain silly or tendentious, as in his repeated identification of homosexuality with narcissism, and his effusions about certain lovers past and present.

Kazin is consistent in his recognition that Americans are consumed with the desire to "get more, more," as he put in 1964, yet are never satisfied with what they have. He finds intellectual stimulation in the work of friends like Saul Bellow, Hannah Arendt, and Edmund Wilson, but among writers his abiding favorites are Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Adams, each of whom offered what Kazin recognized as essential, if contrasting, insights into the American soul.

It is important for me to emphasize what Kazin's journal is not. It is not a first rough draft of his published work, though obviously the issues raised in the journal both consciously and unconsciously find their way into his journalism, literary criticism and memoirs. Where I have had the chance to compare Kazin's journal entries with subsequent published work, as in the case of an essay he wrote about a visit in the late 1960s back to his old neighborhood in Brownsville, the differences in substance and style between the journal entries and the

printed work are profound. The difference is between the artless tendentiousness of the journals and the compelling acuity of the memoirs and journalism.

Nor is Kazin's journal really his "private lie detector," as he put it in a 1966 entry, since he rarely cross-examines his own testimony, much less that of peers with whom he eats meals or butts heads in public places. The journal emerges as a many-sided vehicle for a man who must write to live. It is his alternative to therapy—or its contemporary equivalent, jogging. It helped him cope with his demons and his admitted follies, helped him strip his ego bare, or at least pretend to do so. It afforded him a chance to express inchoate thoughts and gauge if they could fly as prose. Perhaps not least, the journals were Alfred Kazin's private clubhouse. A man with a history of on-again, off-again friendships, not to mention stormy marriages, needed a confidant who would not talk back to him except as he controlled the conversation.

Having offered my own take on the journal's contours and texture, it would be unfair of me not to share with you some of the particulars that help one understand the state of Alfred Kazin in the Sixties, the particular tropes and demons of a gifted writer, and, perhaps, some of the spirit of the age.

Kazin on his journal:

> *Talking to myself, as I do here, I nevertheless find in the expression of private uncertainties a form of release, a clarity, from which I can start up again.* (For a somewhat different view, see entry of 5/25/68.)

Kazin on the Vietnam war, in an entry prompted by reading of the death of the journalist Bernard Fall in February 1967:

> *This God-damned war, this most stupid of all wars... I don't think the whole of Southeast Asia, as related to the present future and safety and freedom of people in this country, is worth the life of or limb of a single American.* (2/21/67)

On his erstwhile friend Irving Howe:

> *Question: Name even the slightest social change in this country that Irving Howe has helped to bring about?* (1/22/67)

On the American experience: The key to America, he wrote in 1963, is the absorption of

> *...religious liberty into economic individualism and then into psychological self affirmation merely.* (7/15/63)

On John F. Kennedy as president:

> *... the perfect example of the inefficaciousness of sophistication alone.* (5/15/63)

On his brother-in-law, the writer Daniel Bell:

> *He is so parochially Jewish and so full of his impatient ambition that this crudity, expressed for me in his bulging fat, leave me amazed in my contempt for him.* (4/17/65)

On the Civil Rights marchers of early 1965: it is

> *great, great, great. Religion in politics.* (3/24/65)

On Richard Hofstadter's efforts to make the center hold at Columbia University during the tumult there in 1968:

> *Dick is right in principle, of course, but oh how funny it all comes out to see our generation as the custodians of law and order.* (9/7-8/68)

On his stormy marriage to Ann Birstein:

> *... the thing has become a bloody farce.* (9/15/65)

On his college son's radicalism:

> *Michael's SDS line irritates me because it is so abstract and sometimes down-right false.* (7/22/69)

On academic literary criticism:

> *Fundamentally, critical prose in the academy is furtive, inarticulate, self conscious.... Everything is reduced to categories.... There is no truth, only games and pretenses....* (1/1/64, 5/16/64)

On the *New Yorker* writer Robert Shaplen:

> *... a pretty stupid guy.* (6/19/65)

On members of the academic community at the state university of New York:

> *... what a bunch of bores.* (12/7/66)

On former leftists Sidney Hook, Diana Trilling and Arnold Beichman:

> *To go into a room with these people is like undergoing a doctor's oral.... They have to be right. They are right. The world can go to hell, but they are* ***right****.* (4/20/69)

On brief thoughts of suicide by hanging:

> *As usual I had so many deadlines and classes to meet that I had to postpone my death.* (10/26/65)

On Nelson Algren's review of his book *Contemporaries*:

> *disgusting, rotten, ... dishonest.* (5/3/62)

On Mary McCarthy:

> *a self centered wretch.* (11/13/61)

On his ongoing obsession with his personal history:

> *I hug the past with my mind.* (7/63)

Kazin on the *zeitgeist*: "The real metaphor of this period," he says of the Sixties, is "fucking" (1/20/67) Or, as he put

it after the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, "this is an age of outrage." (6/7/68)

And, finally, Kazin, commenting on his own book, *Starting Out in the Thirties*, after reading page proofs: It's "darned good." (3/25/62)

The journal, then, provided—and so far as I know, still provides—Alfred Kazin with an invaluable sounding board that never talked back to him yet often provided inspiration for a unique corpus of journalism, literary criticism, and personal history. The Kazin journal, as it becomes available to researchers, will surely rank among the most voluminous and valuable, albeit exasperating, personal documents of our century.

Permission to quote from his journals was granted to the author by Alfred Kazin.

Poems from Captured Documents, selected and translated by Thanh T. Nguyen and Bruce Weigl. University of Massachusetts Press, 1994.

Reviewed by Linh Dinh

Poems from Captured Documents is a bilingual collection of twenty-three poems salvaged from the diaries of dead, injured, and/or captured Communist soldiers during the Viet Nam war. The diaries were gathered by South Vietnamese and American intelligence, and stored on 19 miles worth of microfilm. The collection is named, appropriately, The Combined Documents Exploitation Center of Captured Documents. The originals are presumed to be lost, most likely destroyed by the departing American troops when Saigon fell in 1975, and only three sets are available in the United States. The William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences in Boston owns a copy, and Thanh T. Nguyen, who was a research associate there, alerted poet Bruce Weigl, best known for his collection, *Song of Napalm*, to the existence of these poems. Together they rifled through the microfilm, past supply lists, hand-drawn maps, battle diagrams, and assorted trivia, to look for shapes resembling poems. Weigl, who does not read Vietnamese, would then rely on Nguyen for a literal word-by-word translation and annotation to craft his finished products. Weigl also had help from poets Ngo Vinh Vien and Nguyen Quang Thieu during his visit to Hanoi in 1992.

Translating poetry is a treacherous enterprise, and it would be all-too-easy to nit-pick at someone's labor. Weigl, whose wired, at times hallucinatory, voice in *Song of Napalm* has been much celebrated, only did a serviceable job with the majority of these versions. Inaccuracies are few and forgivable, as in, for example, the conversion of the gender specific "thay," meaning "father" in the poem "Voice of the Lullaby," to "parents." In at least one instance, however, Weigl improved on the original. The plodding, prose-like litany of complaints, "In the Forest At Night," actually approximates a poem, though not a very good one, in its English reincarnation. The last three lines are standard patriotic cant:

> Friends, we are the young men of a heroic nation.
> Though we struggle with hardship and sacrifice,
> We will win at last in the end.

To put these lines in perspective, imagine if an American GI had written them. Jingoism is jingoism, in any language.

One is stumped trying to figure out why Duc Thanh, its author, and one of only two poets with multiple selections in this slim anthology, is represented by seven poems, which is nearly a third of the book, since his work never rises above mediocrity. A love poem, "Night Of The Moon," contains these Hallmark lines:

> I look and see gold light
> Quiver and shine in my hair wet with dew.
> Tonight is the night of romance.
> I am filled with love for you.

Poor Duc Thanh: first they killed you, and now they print your poems in an unauthorized edition... When Weigl had better originals to mess with, the results improve correspondingly. "Hands," by Nguyen Van Luc, with its frank erotic yearning and bullying tone, is genuinely poignant:

> These hands wander every inch of you.
> It doesn't matter if your trousers are rolled up,
> Or your shirt is unbuttoned.
> It doesn't matter if you knit your brow
> And purse your lips.

A ranting, pissed-off poem, "My Thoughts" is signed, somewhat flippantly, by one "Ong Giang" ("Mr. Giang"). In it, the poet rails against his superiors, who "spy on who eats what and when." Claiming their interest in even his excrement, he let loose these hilarious lines:

> They talk nonsense and wonder
> Why those who eat so little shit so big.
> If I had more teeth, I would eat a village of frogs.
> I would eat a meal of rotten food
> And see if they'd still want to watch.

When victory comes, Mr. Giang went on to declare, his family would feast on rice, fish, and a roasted chicken (which Weigl, inexplicably, translated as "duck"; attention, Thanh T. Nguyen!).

Weigl wrote in his introduction that he was "struck with how similar the experiences they [the NLF and North Vietnamese soldiers] recorded were to the experiences of American soldiers. The Vietnamese had suffered the same longing for their loved ones, the same exhaustion from long days in battle, the same daily frustration, and sometimes even the same confusion about their purpose." The most striking passages in the book occur when the writer veers furthest away from Party ideology, with its tireless harangues and incessant optimism. Tuong Hac Long betrays the fatigue common to all men at war in "The New Year," which ends wearily with:

> I have no choice but to live this new year.
> Older but still trapped in this life.
> I'm tired of you, New Year, and of you, spring.

Whatever its flaws, this collection does at least achieve the sociological task of giving a human face to the grunts on the other side. This accomplishment is abetted, one can even argue, by the inclusion of the weaker poems; to hear a mushy sentiment coming from a trained warrior is worth something in itself. The majority of these guys were, one can safely assume, only incidental poets, and the poems themselves were written under the worst possible conditions. Weigl challenges prospective translators to delve more deeply into the collection of the captured documents. Perhaps there are a few gems to be unearthed. Perhaps there is even a W.D. Ehrhart or a Bruce Weigi amongst the dead bodies.

Linh Dinh is a native Vietnamese speaker who writes poems in English and has works forthcoming in ***Sulfur*** *#36.*

***The Perimeter of Light: Short Fictions and Other Writing about the Vietnam War*, Vivian Vie Balfour, ed. (St. Paul, MN: New Rivers Press) 1992. vii + 302 pp; $15.95 (paper).**

Reviewed by Vince Gotera, English Department, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA 95521; 707/826-5906; email: goterav@axe.humboldt.edu.

Vivian Vie Balfour begins her introduction to *The Perimeter of Light* by claiming that it "is unique in the scope of its vision and its comprehensiveness. Included are the voices of soldiers and civilians, men and women, young and old, representing the war from many perspective, places, and times." Indeed there is a panoply of actors and settings in this book, as well as a mixed bag of prose genres: the short story, the short-short story, the personal essay, creative nonfiction, mainstream journalism, the memoir, the prose poem.

Balfour has collected literature featuring gung-ho grunts, REMFs, USAID staffers, draft dodgers, antiwar protesters, as well as characters not often seen in typical Viet Nam war narratives: a Filipina teenager who meets two American soldiers on R&R at a party, an airline stewardess escorting troops to Viet Nam, an avante-garde performance artist traveling through Southeast Asia where she gets involved with an American deserter, a drummer in a lounge band whose singer—the father of a war casualty—runs amuck, and so on.

The stories hint at the war's subterranean political parallels and (inter)connections. In a story set at a high school reunion, one of the perpetrators of a schoolboy prank involving dynamite is called Billy Bad Heart Bull—a reminder of the first casualty in the events leading to the Second Wounded Knee, where Viet Nam vets aided Native Americans under siege by the federal government in 1973. In one memoir, a poet recalls the correspondences between an exiled revolutionary he knew in Mexico and his brother in Viet Nam: "I think that Miguel fully understood the pain I felt over my brother's serving in Vietnam as a Green Beret and my knowing, all too well, that given the right circumstances my brother would have been duty-bound to search out Miguel (or people very much like him in Vietnam) and kill him." In a meditation on the interpenetration of wars, a jogger "running by Lake Calhoun" ponders the Gulf War ("The new war began two days ago and now the last one is a strange bubble rising") and recalls how, during the Viet Nam war, her "mother customized Civil War songs for us to sing around the piano."

The Perimeter of Light also showcases the surrealism many writers and poets on the war have used as a metaphor for moral ambiguity. In the book's title story, the occasional apparition of a naked man whispering beside men's bunks unsettles a Marine's grasp of what's real (particularly in terms of sociosexual self-construction). In another story, all the enlisted men in a company build a bonfire, feeding it "paper, books, chairs, tables, beds, radios, stereos, records, footlockers, fatigues, underwear, socks, boots, and rifles... until everyone was naked and there was nothing left." Surrealism also metastasizes in "the World." One poeticized collage catalogs the guilt-ridden nightmare images which plague a former soldier dying of Agent Orange exposure: "Faces, an orange tie, a godcollar, my brother's beard, lemurs with lean, hungry mouths."

According to Balfour, Viet Nam war experience is divided between *soldiers* and *civilians*. The prose poems of David Connolly portray with heart-rending sensitivity and humor the grunts in their world of intense brotherhood. In "Even Buddha Cried," and African American medic seems "through the merciful miasma of the morphine, a great suede Buddha" as he moves among the dead and wounded on a battlefield, tending both their spirits—he tells the dying, "Godspeed now, young sojah"—and their mangled bodies. Ordered by his lieutenant to board the last dust-off and go home,

> Buddha rose to his feet and spread those thick, black arms, encompassing the diorama of death and destruction that surrounded us, his face screwed into a grimace, his red-rimmed eyes still overflowing. His heart, after a year of cleaning up or packing off far too many young warriors thunderously transformed into raw meat, was just too full of grief to let him stop. He choked out, "Sir, tell me, how am I evah, evah goin' to find my way home from here?"

In this evocative sketch, Connolly adeptly encapsulates the Viet Nam combat veteran's PTSD-riddled quandary.

On the civilian side, Walter Howerton, Jr. contributes "The Persistence of Memory"—the most striking Viet Nam war fiction I have ever read. To call this story a tale of a "wannabe" would be true enough, but it would be patently unfair to Howerton's memorable characterization and the sheer inventiveness and panache of his style. It is a story of a young man devastated by the distance between his war—marching at the Pentagon and in "the Days of Rage in Chicago"—and his father's war—"On the beach at Anzio or in the hills near Salerno." It is the story of a father who

> followed the directions, read the labels, requested more information, awaited further instructions, filled

> in the blanks, played by the rules, avoided overeating, overheating, freezing temperatures, changed his oil, rotated his tires, not changed horses in midstream, not counted his chickens before they hatched, eaten an apple a day, looked before leaping, never played with fire, walked softly and carried a big stick, shaken well before using, kept out of the reach of children...

etc., etc., etc. Despite the gulfs between them, son and father are startlingly alike, as one of the son's catalogs implies:

> In Vietnam we would have carried our lucky charms.... a rabbit's foot or four-leaf clover, a picture to kiss, a lucky marble to finger in my pocket, a pair of socks that never got washed and were always worn on patrol, a crucifix on a chain, a locket in my pocket with a lock of my true love's hair, a Bible to stop a slug, a prayer on a plastic-coated card, a poem, a silver dollar, a gris-gris to wear on a leather thong around my neck...

and so on. What I cannot excerpt here is the tremendous emotional build-up Howerton crafts in the tensions between the lists upon lists. We see both son and father unable to connect but able only to catalog the superficial. This haunting story tweaks all my memories about those days—the "generation gap," the war of our fathers, the "good war"—at the same time that it critiques our century, our culture, our national obsessions with the external, the extraneous.

'Despite the many literary strengths of *The Perimeter of Light*, it has a major weakness: an absence of Vietnamese or Vietnamese American authors and, within the stories, a startling paucity of Vietnamese characters. I can only recall two descriptions of Viets in the entire book. One is in Robert Warde's forthright portrayals of people he encountered in a 1991 visit to Viet Nam with other American professors to meet faculty from the universities of Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi. The other description, more problematic, occurs in Tim O'Brien's story, "The Man I Killed," in which we see

> a slim, dead, almost dainty young man. His chest was sunken and poorly muscled—a scholar, maybe.... He was not a Communist. He was a citizen and a soldier. He had been taught that to defend the land was a man's highest duty and highest privilege. He accepted this. It was never open to question. Secretly, though, it also frightened him. He was not a fighter. He liked books. He wanted someday to be a teacher of mathematics.

Admittedly, this is a flight of fancy on the part of the narrator who has never come to grips with the trauma of killing another human being, but the way this description feminizes and infantilizes the Viet soldier while simultaneously romanticizing and sentimentalizing him partakes of a particularly American stereotyping of the Asian male, a racist mode which David Henry Hwang deconstructed in *M. Butterfly*.

The Perimeter of Light is therefore an isolationist text, focusing exclusively on American perspectives and experiences. The cover photo by Lance Woodruff illustrates this bent. In stark black and white, we see, through concertina wire, a person in silhouette, perhaps a woman in *ao dai* and conical hat, striding barefoot across an apparently war-ravaged landscape. It's hard to be precise because the shot is in soft focus. As beautiful as the picture is, as photographic image, I am struck by its semiotic implications. We (camera lens, Americans) are here, on this side of the wire, and the Viets are (still) on the other side. In these days of burgeoning reconciliation with Viet Nam, one wonders if such one-sidedness is helpful. Granted, Lance Woodruff's portfolio of ten photographs that are the centerpiece of this book somewhat ameliorate the book's isolationist tendencies, but I find these pictures also a bit orientalizing, exoticizing.

Jonathan Shay, a psychiatrist in a Viet Nam veteran's program in Boston, suggests in his landmark text *Achilles in Vietnam* that in treating PTSD we must communalize the trauma—meaning that we must deal with veterans' stories within the context of a caring community. This is finally what *The Perimeter of Light* strives to achieve, to bring out these wholly American viewpoints and nightmares and rehearse them in public, exorcise the demons. As such, *The Perimeter of Light* deserves our full attention.

Vince Gotera is the author of ***Radical Visions: Poetry by Vietnam Veterans*** *(University of Georgia Press, 1994).*

Dan Duffy's Picks

Janet Gardner's Viet Nam Video

From a press release: *Viet Nam: Land of the Ascending Dragon*, produced and directed by Janet Gardner of The Gardner Group, won First Place Best Destination Video inthe Lowll Thomas Travel journalism Competition. The competition is sponsored by the Society of American Travel Writers foundation and judged by the faculty at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

Viet Nam: Land of the Ascending Dragon also won the Bronze Apple in World History/Cultures: High School category in the the National Educational Film & Video Festival, The NEFVF Apple Award is recognized throughout the world as a standard for excellence in educational media. Each year the travel section of hundreds of newspapers, magazines, press syndicates, books, videos and audio tapes compete for first place honors. According to the SATW Award citation, "*Viet Nam: Land of the Ascending Dragon* is well written and researched. Instead of one continuous narration, the writer includes sound bites (through an interpreter) of residents. The result offers more than facts and figures about the country.... the cinematography is excellent and the video editing is well-done."

Travel videos are a relatively new phenomenon and Viet Nam a new destination for American travelers, many of whom continue to carry much emotional baggage. In 1987, when there was an embargo against travel to Viet Nam, less than 100 Americans made the trip. In 1993, the number of foreign tourists reached 950,000. May of them were Americans. More than 1,000,000 tourists are expected this year in addition to business travelers.

Those who have done their homework may be armed with a travel video to help them plan their journey and get a head start on understanding the culture. "*Viet Nam: Land of the Ascending Dragon* makes it clear that Viet Nam is open for business with regards to Western tourism", according to *Video Librarian*, which gave it the coveted "highly recommended" rating.

Award-winning writer, producer, and director Janet Gardner has combined her experience in broadcasting, documentary film production and print journalism with her expertise on Southeast Asia to produce yet another award winner. *Viet Nam: Land of the Ascending Dragon* provides viewers "a rare portrait of Viet Nam", according the *The Los Angeles Times*. It shows the ethnic groups, cultural patterns, and the historical difference between north, south and central Viet Nam. Gardner, a veteran journalist who covered the Agent Orange hearings, videographer Kevin Cloutier, sound engineer John Murphy , and assistant producer Pham Quoc Thai spent three weeks in-country with Do Duy Anh from Viet Nam Cinema Department. After exploring Ha Noi, they attend the Hung King Festival celebrating the founding of Viet Nam. They interview visiting Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum, meet water puppeteers, shopkeepers and scholars along the way. As the *Seattle Times* says, "Gardner's look at Viet Nam is intelligent and thoughtful, balanced between political history and tourist draws.

Viet Nam: Land of the Ascending Dragon is a 57-minute program, distributed by International Video Network in San Ramon, CA as part of IVN's Video Visits series and was produced in association with Viet Nam Cinema Department, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. To order a copy of the video, call: IVN at 800-669-4486.

DuBois fils

Kali Tal brought to my attention, out of "List 94-2" from A/K/A, Fine Used Books, 4142 Brooklyn Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98105, 632-5870, item # 86, "DuBois, David Graham. . . . And Bid Him Sing. Palo Alto: Ramparts, 1975. 224 p. Stated 1st. Bookplate front pastedown. DJ scuffed, few tiny tears. Novel of black American exiles caught up in the turbulence of the Middle East (including Malcolm X's last visit to Cairo) in the late 60s. DuBois is a Seattle-born African American author & step-son of W.E.B. DuBois. He was also chief editor of the Black Panther Intercommunal News Service. "

I bought it for her and it arrived while she was camping, so I read it. The red and green and black and white dj shows a black man in a white shirt and ankh considering a cross in his right palm and an Arab crescent and star in the left one. The back cover shows a black and white of the author, I guess, with a conference badge on, standing at a microphone with his mouth closed. The rear flap says that David Graham DuBois grew up in small towns in Indiana, studied violin at the Oberlin Conservatory, graduated Hunter College in sociology, did graduate work at the N.Y. School of Social Work at Columbia, and earned his Master's from New York University. In 1959 he went to Peking to study, moving on to Cairo in the summer of 1960 to stay for twelve years.

> In Egypt David DuBois worked as a lecturer at Cairo University; news editor of the *Egyptian Gazette*, an English language daily; reporter and editor for the Middle East News and Features Agency; announcer and program writer for Radio Cairo; P.R. man for the Ghanaian government under Kwame Nkrumah. In June 1972 David DuBois returned to the U.S. and settled in the San Francisco Bay Area. He has lectured at the School of Criminology, U.C. Berkeley and various community colleges. Since January 1973 he has been editor-in-chief of the Black Panther Intercommunal News Service. He is now working on a book, *Racism, War and Revolution*, linking the emergence of black rule in Southern Africa with the struggle for black equality in the U.S.

. . . *And Bid Him Sing* takes its title from the Countee Cullen poem and follows Bob Jones, longtime black American expatriate journalist for an Egyptian regional news agency, in the first person, and, in the third person, Suliman Ibn Rashid, a more recent, less skilled and more highly-strung black American expatriate. Jones meets Suliman and provides opportunities that lead to a job with the U.S. mission, a connection which gets Suliman evacuated from Egypt during the 1967 war, off to a fate right out of James Michener's *The Drifters*, that author's 1960s hippie backpacker novel. Bob Jones arrives at a political commitment, interrupted first by Malcolm X's death, and then by the scattering of the Afro-American community of Cairo in the general American evacuation. The book fascinated me with its resonance with my time in Viet Nam, in details of what it's like to live in a country whose racial situation is a different matter entirely from the States, whose government one is sympathetic to but which nonetheless has no special reason to regard one without suspicion, if at all.

Draft Dodger Fiction

Here is a book I might not have time to review properly but want to get into the record. *A Walking Fire*, a novel by Valerie Miner in the SUNY Series: Margins of Literature, edited by Mihai I. Spariosu, at the State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994, ISBN 0-7914-2007-8, $18.95, takes its title from a remark of the Fool from *Lear* and deals with evident personal knowledge of the family repercussions, late in the 1980s, of a woman's work in aid of US deserters and draft evaders in Canada during the American war in Viet Nam. It starts at the Wall in the Fall of 1988 and jumps around to Oregon in the 50s, British Columbia in the mid-60s, and Toronto. It has a blurb from Rosellen Brown, the author of *Civil Wars*, about a Northern white couple's family life in the South after their participation in the Civil Rights Movement, surely a kindred volume. Valerie Miner's other works of fiction include *Trespassing and Other Stories*; *All Good Women*; *Winter's Edge*; *Murder in the English Department*; *Movement*; and *Blood Sisters*. Her non-fiction includes *Rumors from the Cauldron: Selected Essays, Reviews and Reportage*; the edited collection *Competition: A Feminist Taboo?* and the co-authored *Her Own Women*; *Tales I Tell My Mother*; and *More Tales*. She is an Associate Professor of

English at the University of Minnesota and I would run out and read all of her books for a little article but as I tot up my schedule for next two years it seems that those days are gone forever. Miner seems to be one of these substantial authors one hasn't heard of yet, hitherto invisible to me despite my focus on margins, because she has made her way in the academic system where I don't look for fiction writers. *A Walking Fire* deserves consideration from those looking for such contexts as the family, Canada, the Roman Catholic church, the 50s and the 80s in considering what young Americans did in the 1960s.

Passage to Viet Nam

From a press release for Passage to Viet Nam, created by Rick Smolan and Jennifer Erwitt, Published by Against All Odds Predictions/Melcher Media, Distributed by Publishers Group West, 224 pages, over 200 full-color and black and white photographs, $50; Passage to Viet Nam book and CD-ROM Package $75. Publication Date: November 5, 1994. A book of the Month Club Selection:

Passage to Viet Nam, produced by Rick Smolan, creator of both the *Day in the Life* photography series and *From Alice to Ocean*. The first interactive coffee-table book, *Passage to Viet Nam* features the work of 70 photojournalists from fourteen countries, including 15 Vietnamese photographers. For seven days in late March, 1994, they were given unprecedented access by the government of Viet Nam to travel freely throughout the country. The project represents what is perhaps the most intimate and comprehensive look at the country of Viet Nam and the daily life of the Vietnamese people ever assembled.

"As a photographer, I fell in love with Viet Nam, and was completely stunned by how different the country was from any place that I had ever been," comments Smolan. "One has a sense, in Viet Nam, of a country frozen in time. It was like someone lifted a curtain and behind it was old Asia. We are fortunate to have captured Viet Nam on film now, because things are about to change dramatically. In two or three years, it will be a very different place.

The *Passage to Viet Nam* photographers covered all aspects of Vietnamese life, and traveled to many areas of the country previously off-limits to foreigners and even to Viet Nam's citizens. Magnum photographer Bruno Barbey rode along with thousands of pilgrims down the Swallow River to the Perfume Pagoda. Renowned freelancer Mary Ellen Mark went backstage with the Ha Noi circus. *Time* magazine photographer P.F. Bentley spent the day with Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet.

For several photojournalists who had covered the war in Viet Nam, the project offered a chance to confront old memories. Time photographer Dick Halstead returned to China Beach in Da Nang, where 29 years ago he covered the first landing of the U.S. Marines. David Hume Kennerley, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his war photography, covered life along the tense northern border with China. And former Life photographer Dick Swanson, who met his future wife while covering the war, went to Quang Tri province—his first time back to Viet Nam since the war.

Passage to Viet Nam features over 200 photographs, as well as text in the form of detailed captions and essays by noted travel writer Pico Iyer and Pulitzer Prize winner Stanley Karnow. The book is published by Smolan and Charles Melcher, former publisher of Callaway Editions, whose many publishing successes include Madonna's Sex, Native Nations, and Okavango. A *Newsweek* cover story is planned for publication, along with segments on *Good Morning America* and *Dateline NBC*. Three traveling exhibitions are all in the works.

In addition, a *Passage to Viet Nam* interactive CD-ROM will also be available this Fall, sold separately as well as in a special edition bundle with the book. Interweaving video from the one hundred hours of footage that were shot for the project, still images and sound narration, the CD will allow viewers to interactively visit Viet Nam by joining the photographers on their assignments—sharing their experiences and learning their photographic techniques. This groundbreaking CD-ROM will also allow viewers to join in the photo editing process by which the 2000,000 images shot for the project were edited down to 200 photos for the book.

Passage to Viet Nam is made possible though the generous sponsorship of Eastman Kodak Company, Apple computer, Thai Airways International, The Regent Hotel of Bangkok, Federal Express, Nestle Thailand, A&I Color, Interval Research, Thai Framers Bank Ltd., and Motorola inc. and through the assistance of SuperMac Technology, Tamron Industries, and Xerox Corporation.

A NOTE FROM DAN DUFFY

My brief reviews in the preceding section were written for the Announcements, Notices and Reports section I used to supply for this journal. They are chattier than I would make them for a formal book review section. But I wasn't here to make the Announcements section for this issue. I have been in Viet Nam.

I first went to Ha Noi in April, 1994 and stayed three months as the guest of the World Publishing House there. I worked as a copy editor at the English language desk while learning to live in Ha Noi. I came back to Woodbridge for five months, then went back to Ha Noi for another six, from December, 1994 through May, 1995. This time I worked with Tran Doan Lam, an editor who was hired to teach me Vietnamese language while we both edited Lam's English translation of a French-language manuscript of a textbook for foreigners learning Vietnamese, written by retired Director of the World Publishing House, Huu Ngoc. When I wasn't at the publishing house I was out doing what I do here, raising money and finding manuscripts by meeting people. I started with expatriates, and as my language improved toward the end of my stay, got to know more and more Vietnamese people. I was the tenth subscriber to Viet Nam's new computer network, NetNam, run by the Institute of Information Technology, where I ran a Forum, "In Town," about the comings and goings of interesting expatriates. I used printouts of these columns to orient visiting American writers, both short and long-term visitors, to recruit them to my network of people interested in publishing about Viet Nam in American and the other way around. I got a large grant for Viet Nam Generation, Inc. from the Ford Foundation, and started arranging to host some Vietnamese intellectuals—Huu Ngoc of the World Publishing House, Luu Van Bong of the Institute of Literature, and Hoang Ngoc Hien, the writing teacher of Bao Ninh and Duong Thu Huong—in the US this fall. At the World Publishing House, I helped bring out Ha Noi's first book on North American civilization, Huu Ngoc's *A File on American Culture*. It was to be a joint publication with Viet Nam Generation, Inc., coming out on April 30, the 25th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, but the Ministry of Culture decided that it was not yet time for that. That book sold out in four days, and the U.S. Representative in Ha Noi, James Hall, came to our book party.

There will be time for lots of other books. With Ford money, Viet Nam Generation, Inc. is sponsoring the translation and publication in Ha Noi of an important American oral history collection—to be announced when we have the permission from the American publisher. I am selecting a book of short stories for us to print there bilingually with a Vietnamese publisher. I am selling US rights to some of the Vietnamese publishers' most widely attractive titles, or using the opportunity to find them a real agent. My Ha Noi doctor and I have plans. My Ha Noi lawyer and I have plans. There is a great deal for Viet Nam Generation, Inc. to do in publishing and intellectual exchange between our two countries. There are other countries to get involved with as well. Later this year we finally bring out the short stories of Outhine Bounyavong of Vientiane, Laos, in bilingual edition. The second issue of Viet Nam Generation, Volume 7:3-4, will carry work from Burma. I hope to start an Internet discussion group and archives on mainland Southeast Asian literature in English translation, called "Mekong," to accompany our active Sixties Project at the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Technology and the Humanities. My dream is to have both a regional and global discussion of national literatures whose practitioners have little to do with one another in their original languages.

Some of what I am talking about is happening right now, and some may never happen at all. For me, it takes experience to sort out plans from dreams. If you haven't been part of my Ha Noi world, or working with me on the projects that are only starting to become realized this fall, and you've wondered if my touch has gone from the journal issue of this volume year, I wrote this note to fill you in.

—Dan Duffy

Viet Nam Generation, Inc. Publications

Qty	Title	Price	Total
	Australia R&R, edited by Jeff Grey and Jeff Doyle	15.00	
	Nobody Gets off the Bus: The Viet Nam Generation Big Book	30.00*	
	Continuous Performance, poems by Maggie Jaffe	10.00	
	Future of the Past, edited by Kalí Tal	15.00	
	Gender and the War, edited by Jacqueline Lawson	19.00	
	GI Resistance, edited by Harry Haines	15.00	
	Homesick Patrol, poems by David Vancil	12.00	
	In the Army Now, a novel by David Willson	15.00	
	Informed Dissent, essays by Robert Buzzanco and Asad Ismi	12.00	
	Interrogations, poems by Leroy Quintana	10.00	
	Just for Laughs, poems by W.D. Ehrhart	10.00	
	Kent and Jackson State 1970-1990, edited by Susie Erenrich	15.00	
	Lessons Learned, poems by Dale Ritterbusch	12.00	
	Lost in America, poems by David Connolly	12.00	
	Land of a Million Elephants, a novel by Asa Baber	15.00	
	Southeast Asian-American Communities, edited by Kalí Tal	12.00	
	Stripping the Adult Century Bare, poems by M.L. Liebler	12.00	
	Swords Into Plowshares: Home Front Anthology, edited by Sandra Gurvis	15.00	
	The Separation, poems by Phil Jason	12.00	
	Symptoms of a Finer Age, poems by Joe Amato	12.00	
	Throwing the Headlines, poems by Gerald McCarthy	12.00	
	Viet Nam and California, poems by Renny Christopher	12.00	
	Viet Nam and the West, edited by Robert Brigham	15.00	
	Viet Nam War and Postmodernity, edited by Michael Bibby	15.00	
	Walk On, Trooper, poems by Elliot Richman	12.00	
	Warrior of the Heart, a novel by Dan Barker	15.00	
	Welcome to Vietnam, Macho Man, a novel by Ernie Spencer	10.00	
	White Man's War: Race Issues and Vietnam, edited by William King	15.00	
	Subtotal		
	*Volume discount (if applicable)		
	Shipping & Handling (see chart, p.32)		
	Total		

INDIVIDUALS
• please prepay by check or money order payable to Viet Nam Generation, Inc. (must be payable in U.S. dollars).

ORGANIZATIONS
• first-time customers must prepay
• organizations with established accounts may use purchase orders

RETURNS
• we do not accept returns.

SHIPPING & HANDLING	SURFACE	AIR
U.S.	$1.24 first book $.95 each add'l	$2.90 up to 2 books $1.50 each add'l
CANADA, CARIBBEAN, MEXICO, CENTRAL AMERICA	$4.00 first book $1.50 each add'l	$7.50 first book $2.50 each add'l
OTHER	$6.00 first book $1.50 each add'l	$21.00 first book $6.50 each add'l

BILLING INFORMATION

Name

Organization

Address

City • State/Province • Postal Code

Country

Phone Fax

SHIPPING INFORMATION

Name

Organization

Address

City • State/Province • Postal Code

Country

Phone Fax

VIET NAM GENERATION, INC.
Orders Department
18 Center Road
Woodbridge, CT 06525
203/387-6882
fax: 203/389-6104
email: kalital@minerva.cis.yale.edu

VIET NAM GENERATION was founded in 1988 to promote and encourage interdisciplinary study of the Viet Nam war era and the Viet Nam war generation. The journal is published by Viet Nam Generation, Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation devoted to promoting scholarship on recent history and contemporary culture.

INDIVIDUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $40 per year, book rate shipping included for U.S. subscribers. Subscribers outside the U.S. add $15 for surface mail, or $30 for air mail.

INSTITUTIONAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $75 per year for domestic institutions. $115 per year for institutions outside the U.S. Air mail shipping included.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE AND INQUIRIES: *Viet Nam Generation*, 18 Center Rd., Woodbridge, CT 06525; 203/387-6882; FAX 203/389-6104.

ISSN: 1042-7597; SAN: 298-2412